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A

HISTORY OF ENGLAND

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY

NEW EDITION

VOLUME VII.

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HISTORY OF ENGLAND

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER XX.

THERE are few things more remarkable in the political correspondence of the time than the almost complete absence of alarm with which the English ministers viewed the events that have been described in the preceding chapter. They appear to have wholly scouted the idea that serious danger from France was approaching England, and their chief apprehensions were turned to another quarter. A deep and settled distrust of the Emperor Leopold was one of the strongest motives of their foreign policy, and they seem to have greatly misunderstood and undervalued his character, and exaggerated his designs. The alarm which the aggressive measures of his predecessor, against Holland, had produced in England, and the close alliance with Prussia which it was a main object of Pitt to maintain, had given a strong anti-Austrian bias to English statesmen, and it was confirmed by the long delay of the Emperor in concluding the peace of Sistova, and by some obscure and now forgotten disputes which had ended in the Emperor giving the Austrian Netherlands a constitution

considerably less liberal than he had promised, and in the maritime Powers withholding their guarantee. The diplomatic correspondence of 1791 is full of English complaints of the efforts of the Emperor to dissociate Prussia from England; of fears lest the Emperor should obtain by negotiation some permanent influence in the affairs of Holland; of expressions of an extreme distrust of his sincerity; of regrets that Prussia, in allying herself with him, should have guaranteed the Austrian Netherlands without any frank concert or communication with England.[1] The English ill-feeling towards Austria was fully reciprocated at Vienna, and the Emperor, who was in truth the most unambitious and pacific of the great sovereigns of Europe, was looked upon by English statesmen as the most formidable danger to the peace of Europe.

From France, however, they seemed to have feared nothing, and they looked forward with a wonderful confidence to a long continuance of peace. They were perfectly resolved to maintain a strict neutrality, and they had no doubt that they could do so. The relations of the two nations were very amicable, and even if it were otherwise, it was the prevailing belief, which was continually expressed in Parliament,[2] that recent events had made France wholly powerless for aggression. The suspicions aroused in France by the negro insurrection of St. Domingo were allayed by the conduct of Lord Effingham, and the approbation of that conduct was officially transmitted to Paris.[3] The Assembly, it is true, somewhat ungraciously refused to vote its thanks to the British Government, but it passed a vote of thanks

[1] See Ewart to Grenville, Aug. 4; Grenville to Ewart, Aug. 26; Grenville to Eden, Dec. 16, 20, 1791; Grenville to Keith, March 26; Grenville to Eden, March 27, 1792.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 44, 170, 919, 929, 940.

[3] Grenville to Gower, Oct. 1791.

to 'the British nation, and especially to Mr. Effingham, Governor of Jamaica.'[1] But in general there was as yet no hostility to the British Government, and a very friendly feeling towards the British nation. In November 1791, however, a report was brought to England of a design which was believed to have been formed by the younger Rochambeau, to raise an insurrection in several towns in the Austrian Netherlands with the assistance of some Imperial troops who had been corrupted, and to support the rebels with some French troops of the line, while at the same time an attempt was to be made to excite a sedition in Holland in favour of the 'Patriots.' The report seemed to Grenville wild and improbable, but he thought it right to send it to Gower, whose reply was not altogether reassuring, From the character and opinions of Rochambeau he thought such a project not unlikely, but added, 'If such a scheme does really exist, it must be believed that this Government has not as yet given any countenance to it; but when one considers that the object of it, that part at least which regards Holland, is of great national importance, and is a point on which the honour of the nation has been offended—"haeret lateri lethalis arundo"—one should be less surprised than hurt to find if it should be suffered to ripen, that it should be adopted by this Government, especially when one reflects that a diversion of this sort abroad would tend to compose matters at home.'[2] A few weeks later, Clootz made one of his mad harangues at the bar of the Assembly in his capacity of ambassador of the human race, denouncing the despotic Powers of Europe, and in the course of it he inveighed bitterly against the maritime ambition of England, and against

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[1] Marsh's *Politics of Great Britain and France*, i. 48–50.

[2] Grenville to Gower, Nov. 1791; Gower to Grenville, Nov. 18, 1791.

the Anglo-Prussian Cabal which reigned in Holland. The Assembly received his discourse with great seriousness and admiration, and it was ordered to be printed.[1]

English statesmen, however, are certainly not inclined to attach undue importance to wild words. When the news of the Peace of Sistova arrived in England, in August 1791, Grenville, who had recently assumed the direction of foreign affairs, believed that the last serious cloud had vanished from the horizon. 'I am repaid for my labour,' he wrote, 'by the maintenance of peace, which is all this country has to desire. We shall now, I hope, for a very long period indeed, enjoy this blessing, and cultivate a situation of prosperity unexampled in our history. The state of our commerce, our revenue, and above all of our public funds, is such as to hold out ideas which, but a few years ago, would indeed have appeared visionary, and which there is now every hope of realising.'[2]

The same sanguine estimate of the situation continued through the winter, and was most decisively shown in the session of Parliament which opened on January 31, 1792. The King's Speech was delivered after the debate and decree of the French Assembly, which had made a continental war almost certain, but it did not even mention France. 'The friendly assurances,' the King said, 'which I receive from foreign Powers, and the general state of Europe, appear to promise to my subjects the continuance of their present tranquillity;' and the chief recommendation of the speech was a diminution of the naval and military forces. With the enthusiastic approval of Fox,[3] this policy was carried out. The number of sailors and marines to be employed in 1792 was reduced to 16,000.

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[1] *Annual Register*, 1792, p. 267.

[2] Buckingham, *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.* ii. 196.

[3] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 767.

The army in England was reduced to about the same number. The Hessian Subsidy had just expired, and Pitt announced that it would not be renewed, and the saving of 400,000*l.* which was thus made was divided between the reduction of taxation and the diminution of the debt. I have already referred to Pitt's triumphant Budget speech on February 17, but one passage in it is peculiarly relevant to our present subject. Having explained how his Sinking Fund would accumulate for fifteen years, he added: 'I am not, indeed, presumptuous enough to suppose that when I name fifteen years I am not naming a period in which events may arise which human foresight cannot reach . . . but unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country when from the situation of Europe we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace, than we may at the present moment.'[1]

The Cassandra warnings of Burke were indeed still heard, but they had never been so completely disregarded.[2] Lord Auckland complained that even among very prominent English politicians the change of ministry which altered the foreign policy of Spain, and the death of the Emperor Leopold, hardly excited more attention than the death or removal of a Burgomaster at Amsterdam.[3]

At the same time a strong distrust of England may be already detected in French diplomatic correspondence, and especially in the letters of Hirsinger, the Chargé d'Affaires, who managed French affairs in London for a few weeks after the recall of Barthélemy in January 1792. Hirsinger acknowledged that Grenville had received him with great courtesy, and had given

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[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 826.

[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 414, 415.

[3] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 398.

him the most explicit assurances of the friendly disposition of the British Government and of their fixed determination to abstain from all interference with the Revolution, but he was for some time sceptical and hostile, and his letters to Paris were filled with alarming rumours. He had heard that the Hanoverian troops were ready to march, and that the King as Elector of Hanover was about to join the coalition. He suspected that the English ministers were secretly stirring up the Emperor against France; that they were intriguing to alienate Spain; that they had designs upon the Isle of Bourbon and the Isle of France. He was told that it was only through the influence of Pitt that a proposal of the King and of the Chancellor to bring England into the coalition had been rejected. England, he said, watched with perfidious pleasure the embarrassments of France. Her flag was steadily displacing that of France in the commerce of the world, and in spite of all legislative prohibitions great quantities of French coin were brought to her for security. He soon, however, convinced himself that the dominant portion of the ministry was fully resolved upon neutrality. Pitt, he said, 'does not love us,' but he is too enlightened not to see the enormous advantages England derives from her present position, and nothing but a French invasion of the Netherlands could induce him to declare openly against us. The sentiments of the King were, no doubt, hostile to the Revolution. When Hirsinger was presented to him on January 20, George III. received him very cordially, but spoke with 'his usual frankness.' 'I pity your King and Queen,' he said, 'with all my heart, they are very unfortunate; your National Assembly is a collection of fools and madmen who are in a fair way to ruin their beautiful country by their stupidity and their folly. In truth Constantinople and London are now the only places

where a French "employé" can live safely. I am very glad for you that you are here.' These last words, Hirsinger said, reminded him of Grenville's assurances of neutrality. On the whole he was of opinion that the English Government had no further plan than to extend English commerce at the expense of France. The power of Pitt appeared to him almost absolute. Last session his majority was two to one, this session it was likely to be three to one.[1]

At the end of January, De Lessart, who was still French Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent Talleyrand to England accompanied by Lauzun, Duke of Biron, for the purpose of sounding the dispositions of the English Government. As an act of the late Constituent Assembly had incapacitated its members from holding any office for the space of two years, Talleyrand was invested with no diplomatic character, but De Lessart gave him a letter of introduction to Lord Grenville recommending him as a very eminent Frenchman, peculiarly competent to discuss the relations between the two countries. The objects at which he was to aim were clearly defined. He was in the first place to endeavour to obtain an assurance of the neutrality of England in the event of a war between France and the Emperor, even though that war led to an invasion of the Austrian Netherlands. Such an invasion, De Lessart explained, was very probable, but it would be a mere matter of military defence, produced by the aggression of the Emperor and intended to draw away the war from France and especially from Paris. It ought, therefore, to excite no alarm in England, and it was certainly not a case to which the provisions of the Treaty of Utrecht applied. Talleyrand was also to

[1] Hirsinger to the French Foreign Minister, Jan. 17, 20, 27, Feb. 3, Mar. 9, 1792 (French Foreign Office).

endeavour to obtain a similar assurance of the neutrality of the King in his capacity of Elector of Hanover, in which capacity he could dispose of an army of 30,000 or 40,000 men, and he was to feel his way towards the possibility of an alliance between England and France with a mutual guarantee of their possessions. Towards the close of the mission he himself suggested another object which was accepted by the minister. He thought it possible that the English Government might be induced to guarantee a French loan of 3,000,000*l.* or 4,000,000*l.*, and in return for such financial assistance and for a reciprocal guarantee of territory, Talleyrand was authorised to offer the cession of Tobago. This island was of little consequence to France; its inhabitants were chiefly of English origin, and its loss had been a cause of some regret in England.

Talleyrand arrived in London on January 24. He found, somewhat to his annoyance, that the newspapers had already described him as having had an interview with Pitt, and his mission began with a very disagreeable incident. Biron was arrested for an old debt, thrown into prison, and detained for nearly three weeks; and, as he had no diplomatic capacity, Grenville declined to interfere for his release. Talleyrand himself, however, was exceedingly satisfied with his reception. He described the ministers as full of courtesy, while leading members of the Opposition at once called on him with warm expressions of good-will. 'Believe me,' he wrote only three days after his arrival, 'a "rapprochement" with England is no chimera.'

He saw the King, Pitt, and especially Grenville. With the King the interview consisted of merely conventional civilities. Pitt dwelt significantly on the fact that Talleyrand had no official position, but added that he would be most happy to talk with him about the relations of England and France, and reminded him

that many years before they had met at Rheims. His really important interviews were with Grenville, and he described them in detail to the French minister. He did not enter into the question of the loan or of the cession of Tobago, and, although he convinced himself that there was no doubt whatever that England would, in fact, be neutral in case of a war between France and the Emperor, he came, after some hesitation, to the conclusion that it was better not to demand a formal and categorical statement to that effect, but rather to aim at once at the higher object of a close and positive alliance. He endeavoured to convince Grenville that the prevailing notion that the Revolution was unfinished and precarious was erroneous; that with the acceptance of her new Constitution France had definitely taken her place among the free nations of Europe, and that it was the earnest desire of all well-judging Frenchmen to be on intimate terms with England. He proposed, therefore, that each Government should guarantee all the possessions of the other. The guarantee should be drawn up in the widest terms so as to include India and Ireland, the two great objects of English solicitude. Having explained his policy at much length, he begged that he might receive no answer till the proposal had been deliberately considered by the ministers.

Grenville, he says, listened very attentively. If the proposal had been accepted it would have almost inevitably drawn England from her position of neutrality, would have made her, as an ally of France, a party to the impending contest, and would have wholly changed the course of European history.

Nearly a fortnight elapsed before Grenville sent for Talleyrand to give him the answer of the Cabinet, and, although Talleyrand did not obtain what he asked, he described the interview to De Lessart as extremely satisfactory. It confirmed him, he said, in his convic-

tion 'that the intentions of England are far from being disquieting, and that her *de facto* neutrality[1] is incontestable.' Grenville began by assuring him that the dispositions of the English Government towards France were perfectly friendly; that not only were they not among her enemies, but that they sincerely desired to see her free from her present embarrassments; that they were persuaded that a commercial people could only gain by the liberty of surrounding nations, and that it was entirely untrue that they had taken any part in fomenting the troubles of France. At the same time the King's council, after deliberate consideration, had decided that no answer should be given to the proposal of Talleyrand. This reply Talleyrand attributed to a division in the council, for he said it was known that Pitt, Grenville, and Dundas were tolerably favourable[2] to a 'rapprochement' with France, while Camden, Thurlow, and especially the King, were strongly opposed to it. 'I do not yet know,' he continued, 'when they will be for us, but I can guarantee you that they will do nothing against us even in the case about which you are anxious, of the Netherlands becoming the theatre of war.' 'England is sincerely anxious for peace, and fully aware that this is her interest.' In the course of the interview he said to Grenville that he had no doubt that sooner or later an Anglo-French alliance would be formed. Grenville answered that he hoped it would be so. Writing confidentially to the French minister, Talleyrand said that it was a great misfortune that France had no accredited ambassador in London. Hirsinger was barely competent for a subordinate post. The dispositions of Pitt and the other ministers were not what had been represented. In order to carry out the ideas of the French Government an intelligent minister, sufficiently young

[1] 'Neutralité de fait.'

[2] 'Assez favorable.'

not to be self-opinionated, should be speedily sent to London; and he strongly recommended the young Marquis de Chauvelin, son of a favourite of Lewis XV., 'who has talent in a large measure,' as a fitting man for the post.[1]

Talleyrand returned to Paris on March 10, and expressed himself to everyone with whom he spoke as extremely satisfied with his reception and with the dispositions of England.[2] Grenville's account of the mission is not materially different from that of Talleyrand, but it accentuates rather more strongly the determination of the English Government to keep itself from any kind of engagement, especially with diplomatists who had no formal or official character.[3] It was possible, Grenville

[1] The mission of Talleyrand to England has been sometimes narrated with a good deal of inaccuracy, but the whole collection of Talleyrand's own letters to De Lessart describing his proceedings (Jan. 27, 31, Feb. 3, 17, 27, March 2, 1792), as well as De Lessart's letter to Grenville (Jan. 12) introducing him, and his letter to Talleyrand, will be found in one of the supplemental volumes for 1791–1792 in the French Foreign Office, while Lord Grenville gave his own account of the mission to Gower, Feb. 10 and March 9, 1792. Morris was aware of the mission (*Works*, ii. 166), but he was not accurately informed about its circumstances or about the instructions of Talleyrand. I must take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to the officials at the Foreign Office in Paris for the kind assistance they have given me when examining these and other despatches. Since the first edition of this book M. Pallain has published the letters of Talleyrand in his *Mission de Talleyrand à Londres en* 1792 (1889).

[2] Gower to Grenville, Mar. 10, 1792.

[3] 'Since I wrote to your Excellency on the subject of M. de Talleyrand, I have seen that gentleman twice on business of his mission to this country. The first time he explained to me very much at large the disposition of the French Government and of the nation to enter into the strictest connection with Great Britain, and proposed that this should be done by a treaty of mutual guarantee, or in such other manner as the Government of this country should prefer. Having stated this, he earnestly requested that he might not receive any answer at that time, but that he might see me again for that purpose. I told him that in compliance with his request I

said, that some similar application might be made to Gower to ascertain how far England might be disposed to make a formal declaration of neutrality in the event of a war, or to interpose her good offices as mediator and arbitrator. Gower was directed to decline to enter on such subjects with anyone but the Minister of Foreign Affairs; he was to say nothing to that minister which might appear to lead to them, and if asked officially and ministerially, he was to confine himself to general assurances of the friendly and pacific sentiments of England, and to a promise that he would transmit to England any request made by the French minister, provided it was put in writing.[1]

The diplomatic relations between the two countries continued for some time to be very amicable. An act of indiscretion on the part of some Custom House officers, who in January had searched the French Legation in London for contraband goods, shortly after Barthélemy had been recalled, was followed by prompt and ample expressions of regret from Grenville and Burges,[2] and some disputes which had arisen between French and

would see him again for the purpose he mentioned, though I thought it fair to apprise him that in all probability my answer would be confined to the absolute impossibility of my entering into any kind of discussion or negotiation on points of so delicate a nature with a person having no official authority to treat upon them. When I saw him again I repeated this to him, telling him that it was the only answer I could make . . . although I had no difficulty in saying to him individually, as I had to every Frenchman with whom I had conversed on the present state of France, that it was very far from being the disposition of the Government to endeavour to foment or prolong the disturbances there with a view to any profit to be derived from thence to this country.'—Grenville to Gower, March 9, 1792. Sybel quotes (*Hist. de l'Europe pendant la Révolution*, i. 361–363) some letters of Talleyrand to Narbonne also describing the mission.

[1] Grenville to Gower, March 9, 1792.

[2] See a report of Nettement, who was in charge of the Legation at the time when the search took place, Jan. 10. Hirsinger to De Lessart, Jan. 13, 1792 (French F.O.)

English sailors on the coast of Malabar were settled in April with little difficulty. 'It is evident,' wrote Gower on this occasion, 'that the ministry here have a most earnest desire to be upon the best possible terms with England, which is a sufficient reason for inclining the *côté droit* to be otherwise.'[1] At the time of the declaration of war against the Emperor, Chauvelin was sent over as a duly accredited minister plenipotentiary to England, and Talleyrand, though without any public capacity, was directed to accompany him, and also Du Roveray, a former Procureur-General of Geneva. Like Dumont, Clavière, and Marat, Du Roveray had taken part in the unsuccessful revolution in that city in 1782.[2] He had afterwards lived in exile in England and Ireland, and was actually in enjoyment of a pension from the Irish Government.[3] The knowledge which Talleyrand and Du Roveray possessed of England and of its leading men was likely to prove very useful, and Chauvelin was directed on all occasions to consult with them. Hirsinger was at the same time recalled.

The selection of Chauvelin was, as we have seen, a suggestion of Talleyrand, and the plan of his mission was formed upon the lines which Talleyrand had drawn. The instructions of Chauvelin stated that as the nature

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[1] Gower to Grenville, April 11, 1792.

[2] Dumont says of him: 'Durovrai naturalisé en Irlande, ayant même une pension du gouvernement Irlandais, devait être considéré comme plus attaché au gouvernement de l'Angleterre par un intérêt permanent qu'à la France par une place passagère.' *Souvenirs de Mirabeau*, ch. xxi.

[3] In a complete list of the pensions paid by Ireland, which the Irish Parliament ordered to be printed in 1791, I find that Du Roveray had a pension of 300*l.* a year which had been granted him in 1785, and was held during pleasure. He appears to have taken a leading part in the negotiations for the establishment of a colony of Genevese refugees in Ireland which were carried on by the Irish Government in 1783. See Plowden's *Hist. Review*, ii. part i. p. 24; *Irish Commons Journals*, xxviii. part ii. p. ccxix.

of the mission of Talleyrand had not permitted anything official to pass between him and the English Government, the friendly assurances which had been given him had no binding character, and that at a moment when a French invasion of the Netherlands, and perhaps of Germany, was very probable, it was highly expedient that France should obtain positive assurance that England would not in any way directly or indirectly favour her enemies. While asserting the full right of France to divert the war from her own frontiers into the Austrian Netherlands, Chauvelin was directed to disclaim on the part of France in the strongest and most explicit terms all projects of conquest or aggrandisement, and all wish to interfere with the internal concerns of other nations. In dissuading the English minister from taking any part hostile to France he was instructed to dilate upon the dangers of the excessive aggrandisement of the great German Powers and of Russia ; upon the almost certain destruction in the event of war[1] of the existing constitution of the German Empire, which would lead to a complete change in the disposition of power ; upon the equally certain downfall of the House of Orange if it showed itself hostile to France ; upon the danger of turning France from a friend into an enemy. He was also directed, in his private interviews with the minister, to dwell strongly on the important and delicate topic of the condition of Ireland. The difference of religion and the progress of enlightenment and public spirit had, in the opinion of the French minister, brought that country to such a state that nothing but a close union between France and England could prevent its separation from England, and the first cannon-shot fired in war between the two countries would make that separa-

[1] The instructions were drawn up on April 19, the day before the French Assembly voted the war.

tion inevitable. The decisive moment had now arrived when England, by consolidating her union with France, might obtain a warm and lasting gratitude.

The instructions then proceeded to sketch the other objects at which Chauvelin was to aim. A defensive alliance between England and France, by which each Power guaranteed the other all its possessions, would probably arrest the war at its outset, through the influence which England could exercise over Prussia and Holland. If Spain enters into the war it may be considered whether measures may not be taken by England, France, and perhaps the United States, which would give these Powers the Spanish commerce. This was not to be ministerially proposed, but the suggestion was to be thrown out. In the last place the French Government was extremely anxious to raise a loan in England of not less than three or four millions sterling, with the approbation and, if possible, with the guarantee of the British Government. This object was so important that the King was ready to purchase it by the cession of Tobago.[1]

Some months still passed without any apparent change in the relations between the two countries. In the last despatch which Hirsinger wrote to his Government before leaving England, he mentioned that Pitt had just been assuring a commercial deputation that England would take no part in the war, and he added that the English minister, 'who neglects no means of obtaining popularity,' knows that the nation is solely occupied with commercial interests and does not wish for war.[2] The Government issued a proclamation again

[1] Instructions for M. Chauvelin, Talleyrand and Du Roveray, April 19, 1782. 'Réflexions pour les négotiations d'Angleterre en cas de guerre,' March 30, 1792 (French Foreign Office).

[2] April 28, 1792. Chauvelin had arrived in London the day before.

affirming the strict neutrality of England and warning all British subjects against any acts that might infringe it; and when a rumour was circulated that a press of seamen had been ordered, a paragraph, which Chauvelin stated to have been sent by Pitt himself, was inserted in the papers positively contradicting it, and declaring that 'there was not the smallest appearance that any event would endanger our present tranquillity, which we have so great an interest to preserve.'[1] Chauvelin had himself no doubt whatever of the pacific dispositions of the English Government, and his despatches—which were now confessedly drawn up with the assistance of his two colleagues, and in which the hand of Talleyrand may, I think, be clearly traced—at this time show none of the violence, hostility, and levity they afterwards displayed.

We may find in them a singularly able analysis of English politics. Those deceive themselves strangely, he wrote, who suppose that England is on the verge of revolution, that it is possible to separate the English people from their Government, and that the division between Ministry and Opposition is a division between the supporters of privilege and authority, and the supporters of the people. The kind of political discussion which makes so much noise in France, is in England a matter of general indifference. Attached to their constitution by old prejudice and habits, by constantly comparing their lot with that of other nations, and by the prosperity they enjoy, the English people have no belief that a revolution would improve their condition. Agriculture, arts, manufactures, commerce, the rise and fall of the funds are their chief interests; parliamentary debates come in the second line. An Opposition is regarded as almost as essential an ingredient of Parliament as a Ministry, but the question of liberty is not

[1] Chauvelin to Lebrun, May 1, 1792.

supposed to be at stake. The existing ministry is not all with the King. Thurlow and Hawkesbury are, Pitt, Grenville and Dundas are not; and the ascendency of Pitt is indisputable. The Opposition is very feeble, it is rather anti-ministerial than popular, and it has been fatally weakened by raising the question of parliamentary reform. Paine is utterly unpopular. The great landlords who were the chief supporters of the Opposition now lean towards the Court. The mass of the people are profoundly inert, and it is only by gaining and convincing the minister, that the ends of France can be attained. The prevailing sentiment in England was on the whole favourable to the Revolution. Men praised its results though they sometimes blamed its means, but there are influences abroad which are acting very prejudicially on English opinion. The unfortunate spirit of propagandism which is connected with the Revolution; the growing suspicion that French agents are fomenting disorder and endeavouring to produce insurrections; the constant attacks of the French papers on the English minister, and their habit of representing every sign of disorder in England or Ireland as a triumph of liberty, have the worst effect; and the manifestly increasing violence of the Revolution, and especially the attack on the Tuileries on June 20, are alienating English opinion in both parties and persuading even the most favourable judges that a general disorganisation is taking place. The King would be quite ready to join the Coalition, but his ministers will never suffer it; they would gladly see the Coalition dissolved, and Pitt especially is inflexibly opposed to connecting himself with it. The King does not like Pitt, but he detests Fox; and the chiefs of the Opposition are so hostile to Pitt, that Chauvelin believed that they would be ready to go far towards the ideas of the King if they could by such means obtain office. On the whole, Chauvelin

concluded that there was no fear that the Prussian alliance would draw England into the Coalition, or that the English would regard an invasion of the Austrian Netherlands as an occasion for war, and there were grounds for hoping that English influence might be employed in dissolving the Coalition, or at least preventing a dismemberment of France. French ministers, however, must act with much moderation and circumspection, and abstain from exciting disturbances in other countries. The proposed Batavian legion of Dutch patriots was a very dangerous measure, for it would certainly be regarded in England as a measure directed against Holland and her constitution, which England was bound by treaty to support.[1]

These despatches seem to me full of wisdom and moderation, but there is evidence that the conduct of the French Embassy was now not altogether in accordance with them, and faults, which were by no means all on one side, were gradually producing a serious tension. Dumont, who accompanied the embassy, noticed the extreme coldness they met with from the Court and from the society which it could influence, and the frequent attacks on them in the ministerial newspapers.[2] An apostate bishop, who had taken a leading part in the spoliation of his Church, and a recreant nobleman who was conspicuous for his hostility to his own order, could hardly find favour with a society already scandalised and alarmed by the excesses of the Revolution. When the Duke of Orleans came to England he was treated with general coldness, and when Chauvelin and Talleyrand appeared at Ranelagh it was noticed that men drew aside to avoid them. Dumont acknowledged that

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[1] Chauvelin to the French Foreign Minister, May 23, 28, June 5, 18, July 3, 5, 10, 14, 1792.

[2] *Souvenirs de Mirabeau*, ch. xxi.

they had made a mistake in the alacrity with which they welcomed the advances of the Opposition, and in the eagerness with which they sought the company of Sheridan and Fox, and they soon lived almost exclusively with the members of the Opposition.[1] 'M. Chauvelin,' wrote the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in May, 'continues a stranger to his diplomatic brethren, and does not gain upon the public opinion. As for M. Talleyrand, he is intimate with Paine, Horne Tooke, Lord Lansdowne, and a few of that stamp, and generally scouted by everyone else.'[2]

It was the prevailing belief in England that the contest would be short, and that the French army was totally incapable of encountering a regular and disciplined force. Lord Gower, it is true, informed his Government that he found it to be 'a very general notion, at least in the Assembly, that if France can preserve a neutrality with England she will be able to cope with all the rest of Europe united,' and he added that 'this notion is encouraged by a persuasion that the influence of the Jacobins and an inoculation of their principles will occasion an insurrection, which according to their language is "le plus saint des devoirs," in every country whose Government shall dare to oppose them.'[3] He mentioned also that great efforts were already making to induce the enemies' troops to desert, but it is evident that he had himself no faith in the possibility of meeting disciplined soldiers with an army as disorganised as that of France. 'The state of the French army on the frontiers,' he wrote, 'is such, that in no other time or country would it be possible to suppose that it could venture to oppose a regular well-

[1] *Souvenirs de Mirabeau*, ch. xxi.
[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 410.
[3] Gower to Grenville, April 22, 1792.

disciplined army although far inferior in numbers, and it is believed that the impetuosity of the ministry will be counteracted by the prudence of the generals. Both seem to place their greatest confidence in the desertion of the enemy's forces. Corruption of every sort and in every manner is employed without reserve, and this mode of making war seems to be the boast of the Assembly as well as of the ministry. The miserable state of the army exceeds all belief. . . . They embrace the offers of any foreign officer who is willing to serve, and in fact they are absolutely reduced to this measure from the great scarcity of French officers who remain.' [1]

The Session in England lasted till June 15, and during its course there appears to have been no apprehension of coming war. Public opinion was much more interested in those domestic questions which have been already noticed than in foreign politics, and personal and purely party combinations absorbed much of the attention of the more active politicians. It was at this time that the first serious opposition which Pitt encountered in his Cabinet was put an end to by the summary dismissal of Lord Thurlow, and the Great Seal was placed for a few months in commission and then given to Lord Loughborough. Chauvelin, in informing his Government of the fall of Thurlow, observed that by weakening the party of the King in the Cabinet, it was of great advantage to France. In the Whig party the line of division was perceptibly deepened by the formation of the Society of the Friends of the People for the advocacy of parliamentary reform on a democratic basis, which sharply separated Grey, Sheridan, Erskine, and some other advanced members of the party, from Whigs of the school of Fitzwilliam,

[1] Gower to Grenville, April 27, June 1, 1792. See the very similar judgment of Morris (*Works*, ii. 152, 153).

Portland, and Rockingham. Fox did not belong to the new society and did not approve of it, but he supported the demand for reform, which Pitt as well as a large section of the Whig party considered at this time peculiarly inopportune. The multiplication of small democratic societies corresponding with France, the very wide circulation of some extremely seditious writings, and especially the appearance of the second part of Paine's 'Rights of Man,' which was published in the beginning of the year, induced the Government to issue a proclamation against such writings and societies. The proclamation produced long and interesting debates in both Houses, and it again divided the Opposition. The Prince of Wales spoke on this occasion on the side of the Government. The King's speech at the close of the Session again expressed the confidence of the Government in the continuance of peace.

The tendencies, however, in English politics at this time were not altogether in the direction of division. There was a widely spread conviction among politicians that the differences between Pitt and Fox were mainly personal differences or differences of situation and not differences of principle, that a united Government might be formed which would contain no greater divergence of opinion than had existed in the Government of Rockingham, or than existed now in the Whig Opposition, and that a strong and united Government would be of great national advantage. In the summer of 1792 negotiations were actively pursued for the purpose of effecting a coalition. As they proved abortive, it is not necessary to describe them in detail.[1] It is

[1] Accounts of these negotiations, differing somewhat in details, will be found in the *Malmesbury Correspondence*, in the *Diaries of the Duke of Leeds*, edited by Mr. Oscar Browning for the Camden Society, in the *Auckland Correspondence*, and in the *Correspondence of Burke*.

sufficient to say that Leeds, Portland, Malmesbury, Dundas, and Loughborough took an active part in them, but it is plain that neither the King, Pitt, nor Fox really desired a Coalition. It was evident indeed that if a new combination of parties took place, it was likely to result from the secession to the ministry of a large section of the followers of Fox. The prosperity of the country was attested from all sides; the Government was too strong both in Parliament and in the constituencies to need fresh support, and the Session had hardly closed when the news arrived of the triumphant termination of the long war in India with Tippoo Sahib. 'Thank God!' wrote the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 'we have once more shut the temple of Janus. May it be long before we open it again! For my own part, I do not see any object immediately likely to give us any occasion. . . . Hitherto the star of Pitt has been so prevalent that I depend upon it like an Arabian astrologer.'[1]

The contrast between the position of England and France was at this time extreme. The French had lost no time after the declaration of war in throwing their troops over the frontier of the Austrian Netherlands, but they were beaten back at once, decisively and ignominiously. An expedition sent from Lille under General Dillon fled in the wildest panic at the first collision with the enemy, and the soldiers murdered their own general, whom they accused of having betrayed them. An expedition under General Biron, which was directed against Mons, fled in equal disorder to Valenciennes, abandoning their camp to the Austrians. Such events were well fitted to confirm the opinion which had been formed in all the Courts and armies of Europe, that the impending war would be little more than a

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 413.

contest between an army and a mob; scarcely more difficult or formidable than the expeditions which had lately restored the power of the House of Orange in Holland, and of the Emperor in Flanders. In Vienna, Keith wrote, it was the firm conviction of the Court that the war would be 'brought to a happy and glorious termination in this single campaign.'[1] In Berlin there were doubts about its profit and doubts about its effect on the discipline of the Prussian army, but there was no doubt about its complete and speedy military success. 'The operations of the campaign,' wrote Eden, 'are talked of by those in place as likely to be very trifling and of short duration, but the undertaking continues to be unpopular, and it is even said that it would be wiser to draw a cordon as in the time of plague to prevent the spirit of innovation from entering the country, than to send so many men out, to imbibe its pernicious principles.' 'Count Schulenburg spoke of the re-establishment of order in France as easy to be effected, and makes no doubt of being able to return hither before the winter;' but he thought it not improbable 'that the most violent of the democratic party will retire towards the Cevennes and the southern parts of France, and there endeavour to form a republic.' Catherine offered to send a Russian contingent to the French expedition, but she was told that 'the business would probably be terminated before these troops could reach the Rhine,' and that an equivalent in money would therefore be more acceptable.[2]

The predictions of those who calculated that the war would make the continuance of the monarchy of Lewis XVI. impossible proved much better founded, and the King's republican ministers were the first to

[1] Keith to Grenville, July 21, 1792

[2] Eden to Grenville, May 5, 29, June 30, 1792.

plot against him. His most trusted counsellors were furiously denounced in the Chamber as the 'Austrian Committee.' His 'constitutional guard' of eighteen hundred men, which was guaranteed to him by the Constitution, and which might be trusted to defend him, was disbanded by the Assembly. The language of the tribune became daily more violent. The press teemed with brutal insults against the Queen, who was now constantly designated as 'the Austrian panther.' The very gardens of the Tuileries were thronged with furious agitators. The Queen complained to Dumouriez that when she ventured to look out of a window in her palace a cannonier of the National Guard seized the opportunity of shouting to her, 'How gladly would I carry your head on the point of my bayonet!' and she could see in one part of the garden a man standing on a chair reading out horrible calumnies against the royal family, while in another an officer and an abbé were thrust into a pond with insults and blows. The dregs of the population of Paris were speedily armed with pikes, and everything was fast preparing for the final sacrifice.

The King made one serious effort to assert his authority. The Assembly decreed the formation of a camp at Paris of 20,000 volunteers. It was to be composed of volunteers drawn from all the departments, and there was little doubt that the choice would be made by the Jacobin Club, who were virtually the masters of France. According to the Constitution, no increase of the military force could be made except on the proposition of the King, but this was proposed to the Assembly by the King's minister, avowedly and ostentatiously, without having even been submitted to the King.[1] It excited great division, even in the revolutionary camp, and the King boldly vetoed it, as

[1] Bertrand de Moleville.

well as a decree ordering the transportation of all nonjuring priests. Roland read to the King a long, insolent, and pedantic letter of remonstrance written by his wife, but Lewis for once was firm, and dismissed Roland, Servan, and Clavière, the three Girondin ministers. How helpless he was, however, was only too clearly shown on June 20, when his palace was besieged and captured by a great armed mob. After being compelled to assume the red cap of Liberty, and exposed for hours to humiliation and insult, his life was at last saved by the tardy interposition of some popular deputies, and by the impression which his own placid and good-humoured courage made upon the mob. It was obvious, however, to all, on what a slender thread not only his position but his life depended.

These events had their natural effect upon public opinion in England, and the French Embassy became more and more unpopular. When the Government, in the month of May, issued its proclamation against seditious writings, Chauvelin delivered an official note protesting against its terms, and desired Grenville to communicate this note to the two Houses of Parliament before the proclamation was discussed. Such an interference of a foreign diplomatist with a measure of internal police was justly resented, and Grenville answered with much force that, as Secretary of State to his Majesty, he could receive no communication from a foreign minister but in order to lay it before the King, and that the deliberations of the two Houses of Parliament, as well as the communications the King should make to them relative to the affairs of his kingdom, were matters absolutely foreign to all diplomatic correspondence.[1] Chauvelin still further aggravated the situation by publishing his official correspondence.[2]

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[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 242–245. [2] *Auckland Papers*, ii. 423.

In addition to the proclamation which was issued in England, warning British subjects against all breach of neutrality, the King, in his capacity of Elector of Hanover, announced at the outbreak of the war his determination to take no part in it,[1] and when the Emperor and the King of Prussia endeavoured to induce Holland to join the Coalition, English influence was promptly and powerfully employed to counteract their endeavours.[2] The simple and steady policy of Pitt was to remain strictly neutral as long as Holland was unmolested; to give Holland the fullest assurance of English support if she were menaced or attacked, and at the same time to confirm the Dutch statesmen in their resolution of scrupulous neutrality. On June 18, when the invasion of France was immediately impending, Chauvelin presented to Lord Grenville a memorial inveighing against the conduct of the invading sovereigns, and urging the English Government to employ their influence to break up the league and prevent the invasion. Grenville replied that the same sentiments that determined the King to abstain from all interference with the internal affairs of France, determined him also to respect the rights and independence of other sovereigns, and that he did not conceive that his counsels or good offices would be of any use unless they were desired by all parties.[3]

On July 26, the Duke of Brunswick published at Coblentz that famous proclamation by which he hoped to intimidate, but only succeeded in exasperating, France. He disclaimed on the part of the allies all views of conquest, and announced that the allied sovereigns were on the march to put an end to anarchy and to restore

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[1] Bourgoing, *Hist. Diplomatique de la Révolution*, i. deuxième partie, p. 136.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 149.

[3] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 247–249.

the French King to security and liberty. Until they arrived, he made the National Guard and the existing departmental and municipal authorities responsible with their lives and properties for all outrages that might take place. All towns and villages that submitted to the invaders were to be in perfect safety, but all that resisted them were threatened with the most rigorous treatment. The city of Paris and all its inhabitants, without distinction, were commanded to submit at once to the King, and to insure to the royal family the inviolability and respect which were due to sovereigns by the laws both of nature and of nations, 'their imperial and royal majesties making personally responsible for all events, on pain of losing their heads pursuant to military trials, without hope of pardon,' all the members of the National Assembly, the National Guard, and all the municipal authorities. It was added that if the palace of the Tuileries was forced or menaced, if the least outrage was offered to the King or to the royal family, if they were not immediately placed in safety and set at liberty, the allied sovereigns would give up the city of Paris to military execution. No declaration issued by the French King as long as he remained in the hands of the revolutionists would be reckoned as his free act, but he was invited to retire to a town near his frontiers, under strong and safe escort, which would be sent for that purpose, and there to take measures for the restoration of order and of the regular administration of his kingdom.[1]

This unfortunate document was little more than a clumsy German attempt to carry out a policy which the King, and especially the Queen, had long advocated. Prisoners, powerless and in daily fear for their lives, they had little hope except in foreign assistance, and they

[1] *Annual Register*, 1792, pp. 283–287.

had for some time maintained a correspondence which nothing but the excess of their danger could palliate, at a time when war with the Emperor had become almost certain. In March the Queen wrote to Mercy warning him that it had been determined in the council to pour one French army into Savoy and another into the bishopric of Liége.[1] In April, almost immediately after the declaration of war, she wrote urging, at length, her views of the policy the Emperor ought to pursue. He must dissociate, she said, as much as possible his cause from that of the emigrants. He must announce, but with great caution, his desire to rally all those of whatever opinions who supported the King, but he must take care not to speak too much of the King, to avoid any expressions that could wound the national pride, and to express his sincere anxiety for peace with France. The hopes of the French ministers, the Queen added, are placed on insurrections in neighbouring countries, desertions from the foreign armies, and the possibility of detaching Prussia from the Coalition.[2] In the beginning of July, shortly after the attack on the Tuileries, she wrote in a more poignant strain: 'Our position becomes daily more critical. . . . All is lost unless the factions are stopped by fear of approaching punishment. They wish at all costs a republic, and to attain it they have determined to assassinate the King. It is necessary that a manifesto should make the National Assembly and Paris responsible for his life and for the lives of his family.'[3]

On the 14th of the same month a memorial was presented to the allied sovereigns at Coblentz on the part of the French King by Mallet du Pan, which was no doubt a main reason of the proclamation of the Duke

[1] Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II. and Leopold II.* pp. 259, 260.
[2] Ibid. pp. 263, 264.
[3] Ibid. p. 265.

of Brunswick. After an elaborate examination of the disposition of parties in France, the memorial points to the extreme and pressing danger of the royal family. Nothing but one of those sudden, spontaneous, and unexpected revulsions of feeling to which crowds are liable saved them on June 20. Their position is such that any day may be their last. Their assassination will be the signal for a general massacre. Civilised society in France hangs on a thread, and the anarchy may in a few weeks be worse than at San Domingo. The Jacobins are rapidly filling Paris with their satellites. If the courage of the King in this fatal moment is not seconded by the declaration of the European Powers and by the rapidity of their operations, nothing will remain for him but to fold his robe around his head and to submit to the decree of Providence. The only hope of safety is an immediate manifesto, supported by an overwhelming military force, declaring that the allies will not lay down their arms till the King is restored to liberty and to his legitimate authority. Terror is the only remedy by which the Jacobin tyranny can be overthrown. There must be an energetic declaration making the National Assembly and all the authorities personally responsible with their lives and goods for any injury done to the royal family or to any citizens. This declaration must especially apply to the town of Paris; but it must at the same time be said that the Coalition is in arms against a faction but not against the King or against the nation; that it is defending legitimate governments and nations against a ferocious anarchy which is threatening at once the peace of Europe and the whole structure of society. 'Their majesties count the minutes till the manifesto is published; their life is one frightful agony.'[1]

[1] This memoir is given in full in Smyth's *Lectures on the French Revolution*, ii. 245–259.

It is evident that this memorial was the germ of the proclamation of the Duke of Brunswick, though the latter document was unskilfully drawn, and more exclusively menacing and offensive than the King desired. The position of Lewis was now hopelessly false. He would gladly have prevented civil war and acted as a kind of mediator between the allied sovereigns and his people, but he was in fact corresponding secretly with the sovereign against whom he had been forced to declare war. He looked to that sovereign for his deliverance, and his brothers were in the enemies' camp. He was at the same time betrayed by his own servants; a prisoner in his own palace, and living in daily fear of assassination. There was, it is true, a real though transient reaction in his favour after the outrage of June 20, and if the King had cordially accepted the assistance which Lafayette now offered him, or if Lafayette had shown more resolution, a new turn might have been given to affairs. But the Court had long looked with extreme distrust on Lafayette; they were committed to an alliance with the Emperor, and as on all former occasions they suffered the critical moment to pass. Lafayette returned to the army which he had left, and the ascendency and the terrorism of the Jacobins were confirmed. From Marseilles, which was now one of their fiercest centres, great numbers were brought to Paris, armed, and installed in the barracks. The troops of the line were all sent to the frontiers. The gendarmerie was chiefly placed in the hands of men who had deserted their flag to join the revolution in 1789. The Commune was organised with a terrible efficiency, and all power was fast passing into desperate hands. In the meantime a decree of the Assembly pronounced the country to be in danger. 300 millions more of *assignats* were issued. The dethronement of the King was openly and constantly discussed, and

while the German armies were already known to be on their march, the King and Queen were almost daily denounced from the tribune as accomplices of the enemy and the chief obstacle to the defence of France.

The letters of Lord Gower graphically describe 'the awful suspense' that now hung over the French capital; the wild rumours that were readily believed; the growing terror as band after band of ferocious Jacobins arrived from the South; the fears of the foreign diplomatists, who believed their own lives to be in danger. One line in this correspondence which is not connected with French politics may not be without interest to my readers, for it records the close of a stormy life which has often been noticed in these volumes: 'Paul Jones died here on Wednesday last of a dropsy in the heart.'

In the terrible and almost desperate situation of the King and of his family one last appeal was made to the English ambassador. 'In the present extremely precarious state of the royal family,' wrote Gower to Grenville, 'I have been desired to express to the Minister of Foreign Affairs the sentiments of his Majesty with regard to the proceedings of the National Assembly and Municipality and sections of Paris derogatory to, or attacking the safety of, their Most Christian Majesties. I have declined to act in this business till I can receive instructions from your Lordship. The person of his Most Christian Majesty is certainly in imminent danger. On Thursday the Extraordinary Committee is to make its report upon the King's destitution. I wish therefore to receive your Lordship's instructions as soon as possible.'[1]

With this official letter Gower wrote privately to Grenville entreating an immediate answer as the case was very urgent. The answer was not long delayed,

[1] Gower to Grenville, Aug. 4, 1792.

and it showed that the English ministers still carried their desire to be neutral in French affairs to the verge, if not beyond the verge, of inhumanity. 'I am strongly inclined to apprehend,' wrote Grenville, 'that no intimation of the nature alluded to by your Excellency could be of the smallest advantage in contributing to the safety of their Most Christian Majesties in the present crisis. Your Excellency is well acquainted with the system of strict neutrality which his Majesty has invariably observed during the whole course of the troubles which have distracted the kingdom of France. . . . If the King saw reason to believe that from an authorised and official declaration of his sentiments of friendship towards their Most Christian Majesties, and of concern for their personal honour and safety, their Most Christian Majesties would derive real assistance or protection in the present critical moment, his Majesty's feelings might probably lead him, for the sake of so interesting an object, to depart, in so far as is now proposed, from the line which he has hitherto pursued as the most consistent with his own dignity and with the interests of his subjects. But it seems too evident that any measure of this nature would only lead to committing the King's name in a business in which his Majesty has hitherto kept himself unengaged, without any reasonable ground for hoping that it would produce the effect desired from it. . . . It might give the appearance of the King's partaking in the views of the allied Powers, in which his Majesty has uniformly declined all participation.' While, therefore, Lord Gower was authorised to express, as he had always done, the King's friendship towards the French sovereigns, he was expressly forbidden to make any new official declaration.[1]

[1] August 9, 1792. Grenville to Gower.

It is impossible, I think, for any candid person to follow the English policy and declarations up to this point without acknowledging the strictness and the consistency of the neutrality that was maintained. The ministers had been again and again appealed to from opposite sides, but neither the alliance of Prussia nor the personal danger of the French King, nor the imminent peril of the Austrian Netherlands, nor the Hanoverian interests of the King, nor his strong antipathy to the Revolution, nor any of the violent movements of public opinion which had arisen at home, had as yet induced them to depart one hair's breadth either in word or deed from the path of peace and neutrality. It is also perfectly certain that when Parliament closed in the summer of 1792 the English Government had no doubt whatever of their ability to preserve the neutrality which they had prescribed to themselves. We must now examine in some detail the causes which defeated their efforts.

The Coalition, which had once threatened to comprise all the chief Powers of the Continent, had shrunk greatly in its dimensions when the period of action arrived. The Emperor and the King of Prussia only received in Germany the active support of the Electors of Trèves and Mayence, and of the Landgrave of Hesse.[1] The Empress of Russia and the King of Sardinia also proclaimed their adhesion to the league, but the assistance of Russia was confined to a small subsidy in money, and that of Sardinia to a promise. Towards the end of July the whole allied army, consisting of about 100,000 men, and comprising several thousands of French emigrants, was slowly on its march for the French frontiers, and there was probably hardly a com-

[1] Bourgoing, *Hist. Diplomatique*, i. deuxième partie, 136, 137.

petent judge outside France who did not predict its speedy military success. Mercy, writing to the Queen on July 9, expressed his great fear lest the royal family should be carried by the republicans to the southern provinces; but if they could avoid this, he predicted that in a month all would be safe.[1] 'All our speculations,' wrote Lord Grenville, 'are now turned towards France. I expect no resistance, or next to none, to the progress of the troops; but what can restore good government and good order in that country, and who is to do it, and under what forms, is covered *caliginosa nocte*.'[2] 'The comedy,' said the King of Prussia, 'will not last long. . . . The army of advocates will soon be annihilated; we shall be home before autumn.'[3] The opinions of Lord Gower have been already given, and Morris had long been describing to his Government in equally emphatic terms the utter disorganisation of the French army. 'If the enemy be tolerably successful,' he added, 'a person who shall visit this country two years hence will inquire with astonishment by what means a nation which in the year 1788 was devoted to its King, became in 1790 unanimous in throwing off authority, and in 1792 as unanimous in submitting to it.'[4]

It was not till August 19 that the German army crossed the French frontier, but before that date the inefficiency of the Proclamation of Brunswick had been terribly displayed. The Jacobin insurrection for the purpose of dethroning the King, which had been for some weeks prepared almost without concealment, and had been more than once postponed, was at last accomplished on August 10. With the details of that

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[1] Arneth, p. 266.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 426.

[3] *Mémoires tirés des papiers d'un homme d'État.*

[4] *Works*, ii. 153.

memorable and terrible day we have no concern. The treachery of Pétion, the Mayor of Paris; the murder of Mandat, the brave and honourable commander of the National Guard; the invasion of the Tuileries; the treachery of the artillery; the treachery of the great body of the National Guard; the flight of the King and royal family to the National Assembly; the massacre of the heroic Swiss Guard who alone threw some moral splendour over the hideous scene, have been often described, and the curtain soon fell on the oldest monarchy in Europe. By the decree of the Legislative Assembly the King was deprived of his functions and imprisoned with his family in the Temple. The civil list was suspended. A National Convention was summoned. The Girondin ministers, who had lately been dismissed by the King, were recalled, and with them were Monge and Lebrun, two furious Jacobins, who were appointed, the first to the Navy and the second to the Department of Foreign Affairs, and above all Danton, who became Minister of Justice. The Legislative Assembly voted the permanence of their sitting till the meeting of the National Convention. It was ordered that a camp should be established under the walls of Paris, to be formed of all citizens who chose to enlist. The artillery, who had shown their hostility to the monarchy, were authorised to plant their cannon on the heights of Montmartre. The administrative and municipal bodies received power to make domiciliary visits and seize powder and arms; and, the slight qualification which had hitherto restricted the suffrage being abolished, every citizen of twenty-one years of age maintaining himself by his own labour was admitted to vote in the Primary Assemblies for the New Convention.[1]

It is a remarkable illustration of the reign of terror

[1] Bertrand de Moleville, Aug. 1792.

which already existed in France that the memorable session of August 10, which destroyed the French monarchy, was only attended by 284 out of 745 deputies.[1] The first impression of Chauvelin himself, on learning what had occurred, was to write a memorandum to the English Government, which, however, he afterwards recalled, deploring and denouncing the acts of August 10 as a gross violation of the fundamental articles of the French Constitution, perpetrated by a small minority of deputies under the influence of intimidation, and the English Government now took the first of those steps which have been seriously contested. Lord Gower had been accredited to the King of France; when the monarchy was abolished his credentials became null, and the Home Government resolved to recall him.

Perhaps the best way of enabling the reader to judge this act will be by quoting in the first place the language in which the Government announced its intention to Lord Gower. Grenville happened to be absent from London when the news arrived, and the task therefore fell to the lot of Dundas. 'Under the present circumstances,' he wrote, 'as it appears that the exercise of the executive power has been withdrawn from his Most Christian Majesty, the credentials under which your Excellency has hitherto acted can be no longer available, and his Majesty judges it proper on this account, as well as most conformable to the principles of neutrality which his Majesty has hitherto observed, that you should no longer remain in Paris. It is therefore his Majesty's pleasure that you should quit it and repair to England as soon as you conveniently can after procuring the necessary passports. In any conversation which you may have, you will take care to

[1] Bertrand de Moleville, Aug. 1792.

make your language conformable to the sentiments which are now conveyed to you, and you will particularly take every opportunity of expressing that while his Majesty intends strictly to adhere to the principles of neutrality in respect to the settlement of the internal government of France, he at the same time considers it no deviation from those principles to manifest by all the means in his power his solicitude for the personal situation of their Most Christian Majesties and their royal family, and he earnestly and anxiously hopes that they will at least be secure from any acts of violence, which could not fail to produce one universal sentiment of indignation through every country of Europe.'[1]

A circular was immediately after issued to the ambassadors of the different Powers, announcing the step which the English Government had taken. 'It is not his Majesty's intention,' it said, 'in taking this step, to depart from the line which his Majesty has hitherto observed of not interfering in the internal affairs of France, or in the settlement of the Government there; but it would neither have been consistent with the King's dignity nor with the strong interest which his Majesty invariably takes in what regards the personal situation of their Most Christian Majesties, that his ambassador should continue in Paris when the King to whom Lord Gower was accredited is no longer in the exercise of the executive government, but in a state of declared and avowed captivity.'[2]

The recall of Lord Gower is the first incident of the French policy of the English Government which has been seriously blamed as inconsistent with neutrality. It has been said that Pitt ought to have taken the course which was adopted in 1848, when the English ambassador remained in Paris, and was accredited to

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[1] Dundas to Gower, August 17, 1792. [2] August 21, 1792.

the triumphant Republic. It is certain, however, that as a matter of strict right the position of the Government was unassailable. The credentials of Lord Gower were to the King as the head of the French Executive, and when the King ceased to hold that position they became incontestably null. There is at least a presumption that a Government which is endeavouring to preserve neutrality in time of war, is most likely to succeed if it confines itself in all doubtful cases to the forms of a strict and undisputed legality. In recalling her ambassador, on the dethronement of the King, England merely acted in the same manner as all the other European Powers, and in my opinion she took the only course which was reasonably open to her. If, in the midst of a European war, she had broken away from the concert of Europe, if she had singled out for immediate recognition as a Government the men who had just overthrown the King, she would have acted in a way which was wholly unauthorised by precedent, which would have mortally offended the belligerent Powers, and which might, in the very probable event of a restoration, have involved her in a war with the monarchy of France. Such a course would indeed have been the most emphatic evidence of sympathy for the Revolution, for the Government established on August 10, if it could be called a Government, was at least wholly wanting in the elements of stability. Created by a mob-rising and by the unconstitutional vote of a small minority of the Chamber, it was threatened with speedy destruction by an invading army, and it was by its own acknowledgment purely transient or provisional. The Assembly had 'provisionally suspended' the King; it had appointed 'a provisional executive' in his place; it was itself little more than a slave of the Commune of Paris, and it only existed until the National Convention met.

Such a Government had no claim to formal recognition, and the condition of Paris was such that it was extremely doubtful whether an English ambassador could have remained there in safety. The power of the mob was at this time supreme. One diplomatist, the representative of the Republic of Venice, had already been arrested as he was leaving Paris and brought back by force,[1] and a mob outrage against the British Embassy might at any time have precipitated the conflict.

And who were the men for whose sake England was thus expected to take a course which was at once so unprecedented and so perilous? They were men who, in the opinion of the great majority of the English people, were miscreants of the deepest dye, and whose hands were red with murder. The direction of affairs in France was now largely in the hands of men who had been condemned for criminal offences;[2] and although it might not have been in the power of the English Government to anticipate the hideous train of murders that stained Paris during the next few weeks, even before the departure of Lord Gower the general outline of what was to follow was disclosed. 'The municipality,' wrote the English Secretary, 'has been entirely occupied since the 10th in collecting as much evidence and as many proofs as possible to inculpate the conduct of their Most Christian Majesties, and for this purpose every suspected house has been searched. . . . Many hundred people connected with the Court and the aristocracy have been thrown into prison, and two or three of the most obnoxious have been executed. It is generally thought that her Most Christian Majesty will be brought to her trial in the course of a few days, and your Lordship

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[1] Gower to Grenville, August 23, 1792.

[2] See Taine, *La Révolution*, tom. ii. 257–262.

must not be surprised at hearing the most disagreeable accounts on her subject. . . . Hardly anyone will be bold enough not to find her guilty. . . . It is supposed that his Majesty will at least be confined for life.'[1]

Could the King of England with any decency have authorised his ambassador to countenance with his presence the probable trial and execution of the King and Queen of France? It may be argued that no possible crimes on the part of the governors of a country can dispense surrounding nations from fulfilling international obligations; but a constitutional minister is at least bound to consider the opinion of his own people before he takes a step which no obligation enforces on him, and which makes him in a measure the accomplice of acts that his countrymen abhor.

These reasons appear to me to have amply justified the recall of Lord Gower, and there is no ground whatever for regarding it as an act of hostility. The ambassador was not, as is usual when hostilities are intended, directed to leave Paris without taking leave. On the contrary, he had a perfectly amicable interview with Lebrun, and the English Government again formally, officially, and in the clearest language, proclaimed its neutrality and its fixed determination to abstain from all interference with the internal concerns of France. Nor did Lebrun treat the recall as a hostile measure. He regretted it, he said, as Gower had 'never been the organ of any words that were not friendly, or any sentiments that were not kindly;' but he was consoled by the strong assertion of the determination of England to remain neutral; he trusted that the British Cabinet would not, 'in this decisive moment, depart from the justice, the moderation, and the impartiality which it

[1] Lindsay (Secretary of Legation at Paris) to Grenville, Aug. 27, 1792.

had displayed . . . and that nothing will alter the good intelligence which reigns between the two nations.'[1] Chauvelin, though no longer recognised as holding an official character, was still suffered to remain in England; and he wrote to his Government that there was nothing in the recall of Gower to affect the neutrality of England; that it was merely a matter of etiquette and usage and monarchical delicacy.[2] From Paris the English secretary, Lindsay, who still remained for a short time, was able to give similar assurances. He mentions the excellent impression which the renewed assertion of the strict neutrality of England had made on the mind of the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, and adds, 'The recall of the English mission from Paris in the present circumstances is considered rather as the necessary consequence of the above-mentioned system of neutrality, than as the forerunner of hostility.'[3]

In the meantime the allied armies were advancing into France, but with extreme slowness and hesitation. Morris, in his letters to his Government, justly spoke of their tardiness as a fatal political blunder, and he ascribed it to the fact that the Duke was a mere strategist who never understood the moral and political conditions of the war. The state of France was such, Morris said, that if a foreign army advanced rapidly it would certainly be gladly joined by multitudes, even from the armies opposed to it. If, however, there is much delay, numbers who are now silent from fear, will habituate themselves to speak favourably of the present Government in order to lull suspicion; they will commit themselves to its

[1] See the note of Lebrun, inclosed by Gower to Grenville, Aug. 23, 1792; Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 161, 162.

[2] This question is very fully argued in Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, chap. ix. and in Mr. O. Browning's article on 'England and France in 1793,' *Fortnightly Review*, February 1883.

[3] Lindsay to Grenville, August 27, 1792.

cause and be unable or unwilling to recede. 'If by this means the new Republic takes a little root, foreign Powers will, I believe, find it a difficult matter to shake it to the ground, for the French nation is an immense mass which it is not easy either to move or to oppose.' He still believed that it was utterly impossible that 'the French army, if army it can be called where there is no discipline,' could defeat the allies; but if Brunswick would venture nothing, it might be very possible for the French to wear away the time till winter put an end to operations.[1] In Paris the interest in the Revolution was so absorbing that it left little room for any other thought. It is a curious but well-attested fact that even the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, threatening Paris with military execution and all the members of the National Assembly with death, excited only a very feeble interest, and public opinion seemed to contemplate the event with a strange indifference.[2] 'It is thought,' writes Lindsay, 'that if the Duke of Brunswick winters in France his army will be enervated and lose its discipline, and if he returns to the frontier he will be obliged to begin everything again in the opening of the second campaign. They say it is very possible he may penetrate to and conquer Paris; but in that case the Convention will remove to the South, where the enemy will find much difficulty in following them. I have reason to believe, my Lord, that these are the sentiments of the ablest people and of those who have at present the most influence.'[3]

Longwy, however, was captured by the Prussians on August 23, and Verdun on September 2, and the allied armies slowly and inefficiently began the siege of Thion-

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[1] Morris's *Works*, ch. ii. p. 196.

[2] Gower to Grenville, Aug. 3, 1792. See, too, Moore's *Journal of a Residence in France from August to December* 1792, Aug. 19–21.

[3] Lindsay to Grenville, Aug. 27, 1792.

ville and pushed forward into the rocky and thickly wooded country of the Argonne, which formed the chief natural obstacle to the march on Paris. Lafayette, who had endeavoured to support the Constitution after August 10, had been compelled to fly from his own army at Sedan, and was now a prisoner in the hands of the Austrians; but Dumouriez, who replaced him, hastened to occupy and defend the five roads which lead through the Argonne. On September 13 and 14, however, the allies succeeded in obtaining possession of one of them, and Dumouriez was compelled to fall back on a new position at Ste. Menehould. A skilful and daring general would at this time almost certainly have annihilated the small and undisciplined French army, but Brunswick contented himself with merely harassing the retreat, and Dumouriez acknowledged that such a panic arose that 10,000 men fled before 1,500 Prussian hussars. The position of Ste. Menehould was a strong one. Two large bodies of French troops under the command of Beurnonville and Kellermann were daily expected, and recruits were streaming in from all sides, but nevertheless it seemed certain to almost all the best judges in Europe that a single easy victory would place Paris at the mercy of the invader.[1]

In that city scenes were enacting which can never pass from the memory of man. The small band of desperate miscreants, who had seized upon the municipal authority on August 10, had created one of the most terrible despotisms of which history has any record, and the moribund and discredited National Assembly,

[1] On Sept. 11, Eden wrote to Grenville that he had just seen a letter from one of the principal persons in the King of Prussia's suite written just after the surrender of Verdun. It predicted that the allies would be at Paris between the 20th and 25th inst., and that the King would probably return to Potsdam before the end of October.

after some faint struggles, sank into little more than the register of its will. Robespierre, Marat, Danton, Collot-d'Herbois, and a few others, were its leading spirits, and the savage armed mob from Paris and its neighbourhood, as well as the fierce Jacobins from Marseilles and Brittany, were the agents of their designs. By plays in the theatres, by mob orators haranguing in the Palais Royal and in the garden of the Tuileries, by processions and banners in the streets, by incendiary placards written by Marat and his followers and posted on every wall, by incessant and menacing deputations to the Assembly, by paid agents who were screaming for blood from the galleries, and by the constant circulation of the vilest calumnies, the popular fury was steadily sustained. The statues of the Kings of France were now overthrown. Every emblem of royalty was effaced. The churches were plundered. Their bells were melted down for cannon. The property of the emigrants was seized. Committees of 'surveillance' were appointed by the Commune in each of the forty-eight sections of Paris. Lists were drawn up of all suspected citizens; and, while the barriers were closed, the river guarded, and passports refused, the Commune undertook domiciliary visits and the arrest of all suspected persons. The prisons were soon thronged; not with ordinary criminals, but with men who had lately been among the most respected in France, with non-juring priests, with old courtiers and Government functionaries, with members of the once privileged orders.

On August 18 the Assembly, intimidated by the threat of an immediate insurrection, had reluctantly obeyed the order of the Commune for the creation of an elective revolutionary tribunal, with powers of life and death, for the trial of suspected royalists; but, though executions took place, the guillotine moved too slowly for Robespierre and Danton, and the acquittal of Mont-

morin made them fear that a reaction might be impending. Marat was already preaching a general massacre, and Danton deliberately determined at once to give the opening war a desperate character by taking away every hope of pardon, to extirpate every possible element of counter-revolution within his reach, and to strike terror into all who resisted the domination of the Commune.

It is not necessary to describe the hideous scenes of massacre that followed. They began on September 2, when twenty-four nonjuring priests, who had been temporarily confined in the Town Hall, were removed to the Abbey. They were, one by one, dragged out of the carriages which conveyed them, and, with three exceptions, they were all murdered. One hundred and fifty or two hundred priests who had been confined in the Carmelite Church were next slaughtered. During six days and five nights the emissaries of the Commune, wearing the municipal scarfs, proceeded through the prisons of Paris, calling out the royalist prisoners one by one, and after a few rapid questions asked and answered, sending them to be murdered in the prison courts. Some few were released against whom no charge was even alleged. A few others escaped in the confusion of the night, by strange accidents, by the courageous intervention of powerful friends, or even by those sudden movements of compassion that are occasionally witnessed in the most ferocious crowd, but such escapes were very rare. Of the number of the victims it is difficult to speak with confidence. Lindsay, who left Paris in the midst of the carnage, estimated the number massacred on the night of September 3 at 4,000,[1] and some of the best French historians have calculated the total number of victims at 5,000, 6,000, or even 8,000. It is probable, however, that in this, as

[1] Lindsay to Grenville, Sept. 3, 1792.

in most similar cases, there has been some exaggeration, and the most careful modern investigations have placed the number of the murdered at somewhat more than 1,300.[1] Among them were the Archbishop of Arles, the Bishops of Beauvais and Saintes, Montmorin, who had lately directed with singular ability the foreign policy of France, his brother, who had just been acquitted of all guilt even by the revolutionary tribunal, but who had been arbitrarily thrown back into prison, the minister D'Abancourt, Rulhières the late commander of the gendarmes, many magistrates and justices of the peace, old soldiers, old officers of Court, and scions of some of the noblest houses in France. There were octogenarians among the victims; there were more than forty boys who were not yet seventeen, and there were a few women. The most conspicuous of these was the Princess de Lamballe, who, as the intimate friend of the Queen, was especially obnoxious to the revolutionists. Her corpse was horribly mutilated and outraged, and her severed head was borne on a pike, first of all to the palace of the Duke of Orleans, and then to the Temple, where it was held up in triumph before the window, that it might be seen by the Queen.

All this was no explosion of blind fear or passion, but a massacre deliberately and carefully organised, and its main organiser was Danton, the Minister of Justice, one of the leading members of the Government which Pitt has been so much blamed for not having immediately recognised. On the second day of the massacre, the Committee of Public Safety issued a circular, signed by Danton, announcing the event, and inviting 'their

[1] See Taine, *Hist. de la Révolution*, ii. 281–309. See, too, the admirably full investigation of the subject in *Mortimer Ternaux*, tom. iii. Thiers says the number of the victims was estimated at from 6,000 to 12,000. According to Lamartine the estimates ranged from 2,000 or 3,000 to 10,000.

brothers in the departments to follow the example of Paris.'[1] They were not slow to do so, and similar murders, though on a smaller scale, speedily took place in numerous towns in France.

It is hardly surprising that these events, and the almost certainly impending murder of the King, should have greatly modified the opinions and sympathies of Englishmen. Even Fox, though still passionately devoted to the Revolution, and very ready to justify the outrages of August 10, spoke, in his private letters, of the September murders as crimes incapable of extenuation, though he tried to persuade himself that the Jacobins, whom he wished to see in power, were not responsible for them.[2] On those who were less imbued with the new ideas, the ghastly scenes in Paris weighed with the horrors of a nightmare. 'All my ideas of happiness,' wrote Lord Auckland to a friend, 'are shaken by the calamitous history of France, every circumstance of which passes from day to day through my hands, and disturbs my mind both sleeping and waking. It is not an exaggeration to say that above 20,000 cold-blooded murders have been committed in that devoted country within the last eight months, and that above a million of orphan families have been reduced to beggary. . . . To this are to be added the proscriptions, emigrations, and banishments; the desolations still going forward under foreign invasion and civil fury; and the near prospect of a famine. . . . Our life is embittered by the details which we receive, and we can talk of nothing else. I wish I could tell you that the Duke of Brunswick is advancing rapidly to Paris.'[3] A letter of Grenville to his brother, written a few days after the

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[1] Taine, ii. 283–288.

[2] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 368, 369, 371, 374.

[3] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, ii. 66, 67.

news of the massacre arrived, shows decisively the real feelings and intentions of the English Minister for Foreign Affairs. 'The Duke of Brunswick's progress,' he writes, 'does not keep pace with the impatience of our wishes, but I doubt whether it is reasonable to expect more. The detail of the late events at Paris is so horrible that I do not like to let my mind dwell upon them; and yet I fear that scene of shocking and savage barbarity is very far from its close. I deliver this day to the Imperial and Neapolitan ministers a note with the formal assurance that, in case of the murder of the King or Queen, the persons guilty of that crime shall not be allowed any asylum in the King's dominions. . . . I imagine everybody will think the thing itself right, and some people seem to hope it may prevent the commission of the crime in question. In this hope I am not very sanguine.'[1]

On the day on which Grenville wrote this letter, the battle of Valmy was fought, and a wholly new turn was given to the fortunes of the war. The extreme slowness and indecision of the manœuvres of Brunswick had clearly shown how exaggerated was the military reputation he had hitherto enjoyed, and how peculiarly unfitted he was for a revolutionary war. Swift and brilliant strokes were especially needed to act upon the overwrought popular imagination, to scatter armies that were still undisciplined, but which might soon become very formidable, and to overthrow a system of government which had not yet had time to consolidate itself. A slight change of personalities might have at this moment changed the whole course of events. But Brunswick was one of the last men to cope with the emergency. Slow, safe, cautious, and methodical; thoroughly acquainted with the technical rules of his

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 217.

profession, but with little originality or pliancy of intellect, and still less of that kind of courage which assumes lightly the responsibility of untried and dangerous enterprises; although he had been formed in the school of Frederick, he was a general of a type which Frederick had already done much to discredit, and everything conspired to bring his defects into relief. The allies had begun the campaign imagining that they would scarcely meet with any resistance, and the army, both in numbers and artillery, was much below the strength that Brunswick had deemed necessary. There was great jealousy between the Austrians and Prussians. The presence of the King of Prussia and of the French princes in the camp was a constant embarrassment to the Commander-in-Chief, and it soon became evident that the expectations which the emigrants had held out, of a general rising against the Revolution, and a general defection of the French troops, were wholly fallacious.

Brunswick desired above all things to risk nothing, and he would have gladly confined the campaign to the siege and capture of a few strong places near the frontier. Having to protect communications, and occupy the places he had taken, his army was much scattered, and the French general who was opposed to him was greatly his superior in military enterprise and resource. For a short time after Dumouriez had suffered the pass through the Argonne to fall into the hands of the allies, the French army seemed in an almost hopeless condition of weakness and disorganisation, but the precious moments were suffered to pass. The French were now powerfully posted, and the arrival of the expected reinforcements under Beurnonville and Kellermann raised their number to sixty or seventy thousand. They were chiefly soldiers of the old army of the Monarchy, and although their discipline had been profoundly impaired, and most of their superior officers had gone over to the

enemy, the military spirit was reviving under the lead of skilful generals.

On September 20 the allied armies advanced to attack them near Valmy. The affair consisted of little more than a cannonade and a reconnaissance. A considerable body of the French were driven back from a position which it was impossible to hold; the ground was occupied by the Prussians, and Brunswick then proceeded to advance against the powerful division of the French army, which was strongly posted, under the command of Kellermann, on a height behind the mill at Valmy. A thick autumn fog hung over the scene, but the sun suddenly pierced it and disclosed the formidable position of the troops of Kellermann. There was a long and vigorous cannonade from both sides, but the threatened general assault was never made. The unexpected strength of the French position, the steadiness with which the French troops had borne the Prussian cannonade, and the defiant shouts of 'Vive la Nation!' mingling with the inspiring strains of the 'Marseillaise,' which arose from their ranks, convinced Brunswick that the enterprise before him was more serious than he had supposed. He determined to desist till Austrian reinforcements arrived; he ordered his troops to retire, and he failed in a subsequent attempt to cut off the French communications with Vitry.

There was no pursuit and no rout. No cannon were taken. The loss on each side appears to have been only about 200 men,[1] and the Prussians continued to occupy the ground from which the French had been dislodged. The affair can hardly be called a battle, and was certainly not a victory on either side. From a military point of view it was very insignificant, and there are hundreds of days in the history of France which were

[1] This is the estimate of Sybel; Thiers says 800 or 900.

far more glorious for the French arms. But in spite of all this, the battle of Valmy occupies in the history of the French Revolution a position very similar to that of the equally insignificant battle of Bunker's Hill in the Revolution of America. The highly disciplined forces of the old monarchies had fallen back before the soldiers of the Revolution, and the result was a dejection on one side, and a confidence on the other, such as the greatest of victories in other times might hardly have produced. It was not without reason that Kellermann, after a long and splendid career of victory under Napoleon, selected Valmy as his title, and bequeathed his heart to its village church. Goethe, who was in the Prussian camp during the battle, as secretary to the Duke of Weimar, predicted that 'on that day a new era of history began.'

After the battle some negotiations took place between Dumouriez and the King of Prussia on the possibility of terminating the war. It was the special desire of the French general to separate the Prussians from the Austrians, and if a more conciliatory spirit had prevailed at Paris the attempt might not have been unsuccessful. The delay was, at all events, of great service to the French cause. France was now universally arming. The patriotic enthusiasm animated all classes against the invader, and multitudes sought relief in the battlefield from the horrors which were being perpetrated both in Paris and the provinces. A vast portion of that abnormal and volcanic energy which the Revolution had generated now threw itself into the contest. Every day brought crowds of fresh soldiers to the camp of Dumouriez. On the other hand, the season was now breaking. The rain fell in torrents. The roads were becoming almost impassable with mud. The difficulties of providing the German armies with food in a hostile country had become very great. Their communications were in

danger, and dysentery was raging fiercely in their camp. On the evening of September 30 they began their retreat. The blockade of Thionville was raised; Verdun and Longwy were retaken without a blow, and before the end of October the whole invading army of the Coalition had recrossed the Rhine.

There had seldom been a more complete, a more unexpected failure, and it occurred in one of those great crises of human affairs in which men are peculiarly susceptible to moral influences of encouragement or the reverse. A wild thrill of martial exultation and enthusiasm now swept through France, and a few weeks were sufficient to change the face of Europe. In the Convention which had now been assembled, all parties were in favour of a war which might lead to a universal Republic under the guidance and hegemony of France.[1] The war raged in the most various quarters, but everywhere to the advantage of the French. From Flanders the Duke Albert, availing himself of the removal of a great part of the French army to support Dumouriez, had endeavoured to effect a diversion by besieging and bombarding Lille, but the town resisted heroically and the Austrians were compelled ignominiously to retreat. The King of Sardinia, without taking an active part in the invasion of France, had openly identified himself with the Coalition. On September 10, France declared war against him. Before the end of the month one French army, under General Montesquieu, had invaded and conquered Savoy, while another, under General Anselme, had annexed nearly the whole of the country of Nice. The Piedmontese fled beyond the Alps, and the chief towns received the French with enthusiasm.

Still more striking and still more significant were the proceedings of Custine in Germany. If France had

[1] Sybel, ii. 19–22.

been governed by any of the ordinary rules or calculations of policy, she would have carefully shrunk from multiplying enemies at a time of such disorganisation and bankruptcy, and when a formidable coalition was in arms against her. The German Empire had hitherto remained neutral, and in the changed conditions of the war it was not likely to depart from this policy. A great part of it, however, and especially the part along the Rhine, was ruled by ecclesiastical princes, whose governments, mild and pacific, but full of abuses and wholly wanting in energy, were very incapable of defence. On September 28 Custine, at the head of about 1,800 men, who had been collected for the protection of Alsace, marched into Germany. On the 30th he surprised and captured Spires, with vast war magazines intended for the army of the Coalition. On October 4 he entered Worms without resistance, alleging the assistance which that town had given to the emigrants. The wildest panic now spread through the Palatinate and along the border of the Rhine, and it extended through the whole German Empire when the news arrived that on October 21 the French had entered without resistance the great fortified city of Mayence, one of the chief bulwarks of Germany against France. It was believed that Coblentz would fall next, in spite of the great fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, and the Elector of Trèves, who then lived there, hastily took flight; but Custine saw a richer and easier prey in the free town of Frankfort. That great commercial city had remained scrupulously neutral, but it was now occupied without a blow, and it contributed largely to the expenses of the war.

The war had already a clearly defined character. It was self-supporting, for the French general everywhere raised enormous sums from the conquered territory. These sums, however, were chiefly obtained by vast

confiscations of Church and Government property, and by crushing taxation imposed on the rich, while the French made every effort to flatter the poor. They came, their general said, to proclaim war to the palaces but peace to the cottages; to overthrow all tyrants; to give liberty to all peoples, and he invited the conquered towns to reorganise themselves as free democracies. The Rhenish towns were full of societies of Freemasons or Illuminati imbued with revolutionary doctrines, and prepared to receive the French as liberators. Between fear and sympathy all resistance seemed to have disappeared. Coblentz, at the end of September, sent a deputation to the French general, inviting him to take possession of the town, and imploring his indulgence. At Bonn and Cologne the authorities prepared to take flight. The family of the Landgrave of Cassel had already done so. Wurtemberg and Baden loudly declared their neutrality.[1]

While the little army of Custine had thus established a complete ascendency in the richest part of Germany, the menace of invasion disquieted other countries. A dispute with the aristocratic Government of Geneva had nearly produced a war, but it was for the present deferred by a treaty made by the General Montesquieu. The treaty, however, was not confirmed by the Convention, and the General was obliged to save his life by flight. On another side Genoa was already threatened, and preparations were made for the invasion of Italy. The French ambassador at Madrid haughtily remonstrated at the large Spanish force which had been collected in Catalonia, and Aranda not only withdrew it but also consented to pay an indemnity to France for the expense she had incurred in watching the Spanish frontier.[2] Both in Switzerland and Italy democratic

[1] Sybel, i. 582.

[2] Ibid. ii. 23.

societies were multiplying, and French agents were actively preparing the way for the invaders. Lord Malmesbury, who traversed a great part of Europe in the summer of 1792, declared that there was scarcely a State through which he passed from Naples to Ostend in which there were not emissaries employed by the French in propagating the doctrines of the Revolution.[1]

Dumouriez, meanwhile, was at Paris preparing the master object of his ambition—the conquest of the Belgic provinces. The folly of the dismantlement of the barrier fortresses by Joseph, and of the invasion of old local privileges by both Joseph and Leopold, was now clearly seen, and Dumouriez lost no opportunity of winning the Flemish democracy to his side. A large body of refugees from Belgium and from Liége accompanied his army, and as he entered the country he published a proclamation in French and Flemish, assuring the inhabitants that the French came as brethren and deliverers; that they only asked them to establish the sovereignty of the people, and to abjure all despots; that, freed from Austrian tyranny, the Belgic provinces should now resume their sovereignty and elect their magistrates and their legislators; and that the French Republic did not intend in any way to infringe their rights or prescribe their government.[2] Dumouriez achieved his task with a rapidity and completeness that filled Europe with astonishment and dismay. On November 6 the Austrians under Duke Albert were totally defeated in the great battle of Jemmapes. Next day the French entered Mons. On the 14th they entered Brussels in triumph, amid the acclamations of the people. Liége and Aix-la-Chapelle were successively evacuated

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[1] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, ii. 52.

[2] Bourgoing, *Hist. Dipl. de la Révolution Française*, i. deuxième partie, 254, 255.

by the Imperial troops; the citadel of Antwerp capitulated on November 28, and the citadel of Namur on December 2, and Luxemburg alone remained in the hands of the Emperor.

Nearly at the same time the Republic gave another signal illustration of the tremendous energy that inspired it, and of the reckless disregard for consequences with which it multiplied its enemies. From the correspondence that was seized at the Tuileries on August 10 it was discovered that the Neapolitan ambassador at Constantinople had used his influence, in conjunction with the ambassadors of Prussia and Austria, to prevent the Porte from receiving the French ambassador. It was wholly unnecessary to take any official cognisance of a matter thus discovered; but a large French fleet was lying unemployed. On December 16 it appeared in the Bay of Naples. A single grenadier was sent on shore to the palace of the King, where he demanded, on pain of instant bombardment, that the French minister should be recognised as representative of the French Republic, that the Neapolitan minister at Constantinople should be recalled and disavowed, and that a Neapolitan minister should be sent to Paris to renew this disavowal and to negotiate a commercial treaty with the French Republic. There was no possibility of resisting, and the King, who was a descendant of Lewis XIV. and brother-in-law of Marie Antoinette, was compelled to submit.

The aspect of affairs had changed with the suddenness of the transformation scene in a theatre. It was difficult to realise that only three months before, nearly all the statesmen and soldiers in Europe had agreed that the Revolution had reduced France to a long period of hopeless debility and insignificance, and had predicted that an army of 100,000 Austrians and Prussians was amply sufficient to seize her capital and to overturn

her Government. Yet within that time a country whose Government, finances, and armies seemed all in hopeless disorder, had annexed Savoy and Nice, penetrated to the heart of Germany, conquered the whole of Belgium, and intimidated Naples and Spain. Lewis XIV. in his greatest days had scarcely been so powerful or so arrogant, and, as Burke alone had predicted, the Revolution was everywhere finding its most powerful instruments in the democratic principles which it propagated, and in the numerous allies which those principles secured for it in every country which it invaded. The confidence of the Revolutionists was unbounded. 'We must break with all the Cabinets in Europe,' said Brissot. 'What are the boasted schemes of Alberoni or Richelieu compared with the great revolutions we are called upon to make? . . . *Novus rerum nascitur ordo.*'

It was inevitable that neutral Powers should look with alarm on the terrible phenomenon which was unfolding itself, and should find a serious and menacing significance in correspondences with Paris that were established by societies within their borders. In order to form a just judgment of the conduct of the English Government in this great crisis, we must follow its proceedings very closely.

We may first examine the situation as it is disclosed in the secret correspondence of the French agents with their Government. Chauvelin, as we have seen, strongly urged, at the time of the recall of Lord Gower, that this should not be regarded as in any way a measure of hostility to France, and that it should not be followed by his own recall. To anyone, he wrote, who considers the conduct of England since the beginning of the Revolution, it will appear evident that she can have no real ill-will to France. Her constant refusal to accede to the Pillnitz Convention, the neutral attitude assumed

by the King, as Elector of Hanover, in the German Diet when the German feudatory rights were first mentioned, and the neutrality which England openly declared at a time when the French troops were entering the Low Countries, abundantly shows it, and she will never accept the position of a secondary Power by placing herself at the service of a league which she cannot direct. England only asks to be treated with respect and consideration,[1] and to be allowed to enjoy in peace the fruits of her industry and commerce. If the moment is not favourable for a close connection with her, if she takes great interest in the fate of the King, and is disquieted by fear of revolutionary propagandism, it is the interest of France to calm her. It should be the task of the French ministers to prevent a momentary suspension of official intercourse from degenerating into a rupture. He did not expect to be suffered to hold any official communication with the English Government till after the Convention had settled the new Constitution of France; but he urged up to the end of September, that there was no doubt of the pacific intentions of England, and he mentioned that the Lords of the Admiralty, in their recent tour of inspection through the ports, had been actually reducing the number of seamen on active service. He complained that French agents in London were exciting much suspicion, and that many refractory priests who were sent to England would probably ultimately find their way to Ireland, where, as 'the lowest classes are as superstitiously attached to Catholicism as in the thirteenth century,' they might easily excite a general feeling against the Revolution.

He repudiated with some scorn a new suggestion of Lebrun, that England might be induced to join France

[1] 'Qu'on la respecte et qu'on la ménage.'

with a view to seizing the Spanish colonies. It was idle to suppose that she would abandon her pacific system which she had deliberately adopted, and the acquisition of Louisiana, which the French minister supposed might be an inducement, was perfectly indifferent to her since she had lost her chief American colonies. 'The most lively interest,' he said, 'is taken by all classes in the fate of the King and royal family, and even those most attached to us think that any act against their personal safety would be most fatal to the cause of liberty.' When Lebrun, at the end of September, announced to Chauvelin the abolition of royalty in France, Chauvelin answered that this was only what was expected, but that it would be most imprudent to require an immediate recognition from neutral Powers. Let France make herself a strong and united Power; let her act with magnanimity and humanity towards her deposed King, and she will soon find the neutral Powers quite ready to recognise the Republic, perhaps even before the Convention shall have fully settled the Constitution.[1]

These despatches show clearly the policy of Chauvelin to the beginning of October. They were not written in conjunction with Talleyrand, for Talleyrand had returned to Paris in the beginning of July, and although he came again to England in September for his own safety, he was then in disgrace with his Government, and appears to have had no further connection with Chauvelin, and little or no communication with English ministers.[2]

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[1] Chauvelin to the French minister, Aug. 28, 31, Sept. 13, 22, 26, 29, 1792 (French Foreign Office).

[2] Talleyrand's return to Paris is generally ascribed to a disagreement with Chauvelin, but in a letter to Chambonas (who was for a short time Foreign Minister after Dumouriez) Chauvelin mentions that Talleyrand himself wished to go to Paris for a fortnight and that his presence there might be useful (Chauvelin to Chambonas, June 22, July 5, 1792). On returning to England in disgrace, Talleyrand wrote to Grenville (Sept. 18) stating that

But at Paris, a change in the attitude of the Government towards England was already perceptible. The French minister directed Chauvelin indeed to remain at his post, and to maintain a prudent and circumspect conduct, but he expressed his complete distrust of the amicable professions of England. In 1756 and in 1778, he said, she had carried out all the preparations for war without the knowledge of French ambassadors. The same thing might occur again, and the Provisional Executive Council, without withdrawing their confidence from Chauvelin, had already sent over several persons on special missions to England.[1]

Some of them may be traced in the correspondence. There was Scipio Mourges, who was sent over as second Secretary of Legation, to the great indignation of Chauvelin, who had never asked for a second secretary, who knew nothing of the appointment till it was made, and who at first positively refused to receive Mourges into his house. There was Noel—better known as the author of innumerable school books—who became a kind of supplemental ambassador with regular in-

though he had no mission of any kind, he would be happy to give any information in his power about the state of France, but there is, I believe, no evidence that Grenville responded to his offer. (See Lord Dalling's *Hist. Characters*, i. 158–161.) Noel wrote to his Government in October (Oct. 26, F.F.O.), 'J'apprends que l'Evêque d'Autun a des conférences très fréquentes avec Fox. Les gens qui tiennent au gouvernement m'affirment qu'il ne jouit ici d'aucune estime ni d'aucun crédit.' There is a memoir by Talleyrand, dated London, Nov. 25, 1792, in the F.F.O. on the relations of France with other countries. It contends that the only relations France should seek with England are those of industry and commerce. There should be a convention between the two countries for the enfranchisement of their respective colonies. The commercial prejudices of England, Talleyrand says, are no doubt opposed to Free Trade, but the fact of the constant increase of her commerce with America since its enfranchisement ought to be conclusive.

[1] Aug. 28, Sept. 6, 1792.

structions, including the proposed loan and cession of Tobago, and who carried on a voluminous correspondence with the French minister. There was Maret, whose very important negotiations with Pitt will be presently related; and there were a number of obscure adventurers, whose business appears to have been to plot with the many seditious English societies that were now in correspondence with the Jacobins at Paris. One man, named Randon de Lucenay, writes that Fox had lodged with him on his last visit to Paris; that he had in consequence come in close contact with many Englishmen; that if the Government would approve of him he would be happy to go at his own expense (for he was, he said, a man of fortune) on a secret mission to England, to propagate 'the principles of Liberty and Equality.' His offer was accepted, and he soon wrote from London that he had seen some of the Opposition leaders;[1] that Pitt was the irreconcilable enemy of the Revolution, and that the French must assist the efforts of the party opposed to him. He thought that the subscription for the refugee priests had produced a discontent which it must be the business of the French agents to increase. He had been 'explaining' the September massacres, on which the enemies of the Revolution were fond of dwelling, and he trusted much to his high rank among the Freemasons to assist his mission. By means of the Freemasons, he wrote, the new principles may be best diffused, and he gravely assured Lebrun that he had, through their agency, so disposed the minds of men, that if the Republic engaged in a maritime war with Spain, she would be able to dispose of half the sailors of England. Another Frenchman, named Marc Antoine Jullien, wrote to Lebrun that since his arrival in London he had been carefully studying English opinion, and had

[1] 'Lord fields, fox, Schéridam, milord Williams Gordon' (*sic*).

no doubt that it was strongly in favour of the Revolution. From six to twelve more secret agents, however, should be at once sent over, who would be in correspondence with French patriots.[1]

In October a great change began to pass over the correspondence of Chauvelin. It was partly due to the brilliant and unexpected victories of the French, which had profoundly changed the situation, and had evidently exercised an intoxicating influence on his not very steady judgment, and partly also, I think, to influences of a more personal kind. As long as Chauvelin was unrecognised by the English Government, his position was little more important than that of the many other agents the French Executive Council were, to his great disgust, employing in England. It was evident, too, that more violent counsels were prevailing in Paris, and those who wished to maintain their position must keep abreast of the stream. In England, the successes of the Revolution had immensely increased the Republican and Democratic party who were overwhelming the French representatives with their sympathies; while the Government, and in general the upper classes of society, were manifestly alarmed, alienated by the deposition of the King, and horror-stricken by the September murders. Parties were becoming much more sharply divided, and the French envoy was naturally gravitating towards the leadership of a Republican party.

On October 22 Du Roveray had an interview with Grenville, urging him to accelerate the recognition of the Republic, and Chauvelin informed Lebrun that he would now make it his single object to obtain this recognition from the English Government. All the exterior relations of France, he wrote, had wholly

[1] All these letters are in the French Foreign Office.

changed since 'the satellites of tyranny' had been driven from the French soil, and he complained that he had no instructions except those which he had received from a 'perjured King,' and at a time when the situation of France was wholly different. 'France,' he said, 'like one who has just received a rich heritage,' must now address herself in turn to all her creditors, and in England the power with which she must treat is public opinion. The Government fully counted on the success of Prussia, and they are in consternation at her defeat. The King and the Prince of Wales are in the most violent alarm. The emigrants are in despair, and numbers wish to return to France. Some of the old friends of France in the upper classes are abandoning her. The Convention had directed Chauvelin to offer to some of them the right of French citizenship, but not one of them, he complained, had yet answered. Mackintosh, who was among the number, had been heard to say that since August 10 and the September massacres he only wished to forget France. The policy and intentions of Fox were very equivocal. No one knew whether he was for peace or war, and after a long delay he had sent Chauvelin a message that it would be extremely embarrassing to him to be made a French citizen, especially if he shared the honour with Horne Tooke. But if the Republic was losing ground with the upper classes, it was very different with the populace. The French successes, wrote Chauvelin, had an immediate and extraordinary effect on English opinion. 'No one now doubts the success of the Revolution. The people are tending to our principles, but those principles are combated by the enormous influence of the ministry and more dreaded by the rich merchants than even by the peers. The Patriotic Societies, however, throughout England are daily increasing in numbers, are voting addresses to the Convention, and are preparing a festival

in honour of our triumphs. Grave troubles are gathering in Ireland. The Catholics are very discontented, and three regiments have been already sent over. In Scotland, also, there is much discontent. It is not impossible that the triumph of the Revolution in France may accelerate revolution in England. "The God Republic has opened the eyes of the people of Great Britain. They are now ripe for all truths." '

He acknowledged that many members of the Opposition were moving towards the Government, alarmed at the revolutionary propagandism and also at the French invasion of Brabant. This invasion, he says, is now causing the gravest disquietude in the ministry, and they will do all they can to baffle it by intrigue. Pitt is full of fears lest France, in spite of her declarations, or authorising herself by a popular vote, should incorporate Belgium in the French Republic, raise Holland against the House of Orange, and, extending her own power to the sea, reduce England to insignificance. England had borne placidly the first fruitless invasion of Brabant, but he believed that although Pitt detested Austria and never considered himself bound by treaty to guarantee the Austrian dominion in Flanders, he would draw the sword rather than acquiesce in a permanent French Government at Brussels. The fear of seeing Brabant in our power and Holland menaced, he repeated, is now the strongest preoccupation of the Government.

What policy they would ultimately pursue he considered very doubtful, and his own judgment somewhat fluctuated. 'Men give the British Cabinet the credit of many intrigues and much activity in Europe. I believe that for a year past its sole policy has been apathy and the most perfect inaction.' The people are now so much in our favour that war would be very unpopular. Councils are continually held, but no decision has been arrived at. Pitt, he was informed, lately stood

alone in opposing an armament which even Lord Grenville desired. The ministry is torn by divisions. There are rumours of the retirement of Pitt, and the King is very cold to him. Nothing, Chauvelin was convinced, but anxieties relating to Holland 'can decide the very timid British minister to the smallest hostile proceedings against us. Since the Republic has decided to respect Holland, you may fully count upon the entire inaction of the British Government.'[1]

The last sentence was written in reply to Lebrun, who had authorised Chauvelin to assert that while France was going to free the Belgic Provinces from the Austrian rule, and was determined that they should never again be reunited to Austria, she had no intention of incorporating them in the French Republic or of attacking Holland. France had already disclaimed all views of conquest, and Belgium and Holland would both be perfectly free to follow their wishes. At the same time Lebrun informed Chauvelin that he had no belief either in an alliance or in a cordial friendship with England. He directed him to pay special attention to the agitation for reform and to the fermentation in Ireland, and he sent him the new 'Hymn to Liberty,' duly set to music, for the use of the Society of the Revolution in London.[2]

The despatches of Noel from London give an independent and a very similar picture of the state of affairs in England. Nothing, he said, can be more evident than the growth of popular feeling in favour of the Revolution, and democratic clubs and societies are starting up on all sides. England appeared to him in exactly the same state as France in 1789. All the signs of a coming

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[1] Chauvelin to Lebrun, Oct. 22, 25, 26, 30, 31, Nov. 14, 21, 1792 (French Foreign Office).

[2] Lebrun to Chauvelin, Oct. 30, Nov. 6, 1792 (ibid.).

revolution are there. In Scotland and Ireland disquieting symptoms are multiplying fast. The Government is anxiously investigating the dispositions of the troops. The Tower of London is not safe from a popular outbreak like that which captured the Bastille. An insurrection is very probable, and France should prepare her fleets. The ministers are in the utmost embarrassment. Pitt, who 'cares only for popularity,' would be an ardent revolutionist if it were not for the party of the King, but he is in great perplexity; he is losing ground, and the party of the King is strengthening. The triumphs of Dumouriez in Belgium are producing the keenest anxiety in the ministry and among the diplomatists, and a corresponding exultation among the friends of France. Noel hears that Pitt has fully decided not to make war, and that Calonne denounces him as a democrat. But Pitt is extremely anxious about Holland, and says that if the French foment troubles there, England must interfere. The City shares this opinion and is full of alarm. The Opposition is divided between the aristocracy, which is much the stronger section, and the sympathisers with France. Fox is utterly undecided. His opinions lean one way; the money which he owes certain great people draws him in the other, and he gives himself up to sporting in order to avoid taking a decision. Sheridan is equally trammelled by his own debts. The storm is steadily gathering. Lord Lansdowne alone, who has always proclaimed himself a partisan of our Revolution, is taking his measures. His boundless ambition, his great talents, and his great fortune mark him out as destined to take a conspicuous part in directing it, and he knows that if he does not it will fall into the hands of Horne Tooke and men of that stamp. Noel is trying to enter into a negotiation with the ministry, but all parties agree that the essential preliminary of success is the recall of Chauvelin. He is

a man of talent, and may be usefully employed elsewhere, but in England he is quite discredited.[1]

From these accounts of the situation derived from French sources we must now turn to those which were given by the English ministers themselves. They had been repeatedly sounded by foreign Powers as to their wishes and speculations relating to France, but they had hitherto uniformly refused to answer except in the vaguest terms. 'Our neutral conduct,' they said, 'gives us no claim to interfere either with advice or opinion,' and they had added a general hope that France might give up her old restless foreign policy and attain order and stability at home.[2] A full and perfectly confidential letter, however, of Grenville to his brother, written on November 7, remains, and it puts us in complete possession of the opinions, intentions, and spirit of the English Minister for Foreign Affairs. 'I bless God,' he writes, 'that we had the wit to keep ourselves out of the glorious enterprise of the combined armies, and that we were not tempted by the hope of sharing the spoils in the division of France, nor by the prospect of crushing all democratical principles all over the world at one blow.' The events of the last two months, he says, he can only explain by conjecture, for one of the results of the strict neutrality of England is that the allied Powers have left her in complete ignorance of their conduct and

[1] Noel to Lebrun, Oct. 20, Nov. 22, 24, 1792. Noel's letters appear to have been opened in England. In Jan. 1793, Lord Sheffield wrote to Auckland: 'Noel, Maret's second, remains here still, or at least was here very lately. He wrote to France the end of November that insurrection would immediately break out in England. On his return from Dumouriez' army, he found everything much changed. He has written that there is nothing more to be done here; he dreaded the suspension of the Habeas Corpus; he had, however, already placed his papers in safety.' —*Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 482.

[2] Ibid. ii. 443, 444.

their intentions.[1] He proceeds, however, to enumerate with considerable sagacity the probable causes of the collapse of the last invasion of France; he predicts that next spring the Coalition will find themselves obliged to attempt another invasion under much more difficult circumstances, and he describes the probable action of the chief Powers. England, he emphatically says, will 'do nothing,' and Portugal and Holland will follow the English policy. 'All my ambition,' he continues, 'is that I may at some time hereafter, when I am freed from all active concern in such a scene as this, have the inexpressible satisfaction of having been able to look back upon it and to tell myself that I have contributed to keep my country at least a little longer from sharing in all the evils of every sort that surround us. I am more and more convinced that this can only be done by keeping wholly and entirely aloof, and by watching much at home, but doing very little indeed; endeavouring to nurse up in the country a real determination to stand by the Constitution when it is attacked, as it most infallibly will be if these things go on; and above all trying to make the situation of the lower orders among us as good as it can be made. In this view I have seen with the greatest satisfaction the steps taken in the different parts of the country for increasing wages, which I hold to be a point of absolute necessity, and of

[1] See, too, on this ignorance, Tomline's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 450. It is a striking illustration of the extravagant misrepresentations of English policy which have been disseminated and believed on the Continent, that M. de Lamartine has ascribed the feebleness of the campaign of Brunswick, his failure to crush Dumouriez, his retreat before the French and his negotiation for a peace, mainly to the influence of Pitt, who, it appears, knew that the Duke wished his daughter to marry the Prince of Wales, and who, by flattering his hopes, was able to induce him to submit all his military and political proceedings to the direction of the Cabinet in London!—*Hist. des Girondins*, livre xxxvi. ch. v.

a hundred times more importance than all that the most *doing* Government could do in twenty years towards keeping the country quiet. I trust we may again be enabled to contribute to the same object by the repeal of taxes, but of that we cannot yet be sure.'[1]

This last sentence is very remarkable when we consider the date at which it was written. It shows that the Government had not even yet decisively abandoned the policy of retrenchment which inspired the budget of 1792. It is now certain that the diminution of the naval and military forces, which was effected by Pitt in the beginning of that year, was a mistake, resting upon an entirely false estimate of the situation of Europe. It can only be said in defence of Pitt that his prediction of the course of events in France, if not more sagacious, was not more erroneous than that of all the wisest statesmen on the Continent.

There were two ways in which French affairs might affect England—by internal agitation and by their action on continental Powers. The proclamation against seditious writings in the summer had shown that the Government were not without anxiety at the great multiplication in England of such writings, and of societies corresponding with or affiliated to the French Jacobins. The second part of Paine's 'Rights of Man' had been an attack, as violent and as uncompromising, as it is possible to conceive, upon the whole framework of monarchical and aristocratical government, and there could be no doubt whatever that it was of the nature of a seditious libel. A prosecution was directed against it, but Paine fled to France, where he was at once admitted to the rights of citizenship and elected a member of the Convention. The trial, however, proceeded, and a verdict of guilty was brought against him in his absence.

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 222–224.

For a time the circulation of libels diminished, but after the overthrow of the French monarchy on August 10, and especially after the retreat of the armies of the allies, the republican societies in England started into a renewed activity. As early as August 14, Englishmen appeared at the bar of the French Assembly to congratulate it on the events of August 10; and in December Lord Grenville stated in Parliament that no less than ten different addresses from English subjects had been already presented to the National Convention, which had met in Paris in September.[1] One of these was voted on November 7 by 5,000 members of the 'corresponding societies' of London, Manchester, and other great towns. It spoke with indignation of the neutrality of the English Government. 'It is the duty,' the memorialists said, 'of true Britons to support and assist to the utmost of their power the defenders of the "Rights of Man," the propagators of human felicity, and to swear inviolable friendship to a nation which proceeds on the plan which you have adopted. . . . Frenchmen, you are already free, and Britons are preparing to become so;' and it expressed a hope of seeing 'a triple alliance, not of crowns, but of the peoples of America, France, and Great Britain.' A fortnight later, deputies from certain British societies appeared at the bar of the National Convention, announcing their intention of establishing a similar Convention in England, and their hope 'that the troops of liberty will never lay down their arms as long as tyrants and slaves shall continue to exist.' 'Our wishes, citizen legislators,' they continued, 'render us impatient to see the moment of this grand change.' 'Royalty in Europe,' replied the President of the French Convention, 'is either destroyed, or on the point of perishing in the ruins of feodality. The Declaration of

[1] Tomline's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 452.

Rights placed by the side of thrones, is a devouring fire which will consume them. Worthy Republicans . . . the festival you have celebrated in honour of the French Revolution is the prelude to the festival of nations.'[1]

These are but specimens of the movement which was continually going on. A bad harvest had produced much distress in the manufacturing districts. In November there were 105 bankruptcies in England, and it was noticed that there had scarcely ever before been more than half that number in a single month.[2] Riots, springing from want of bread and want of work and low wages, were very frequent, and they usually assumed a republican character. In the county of Durham, at Shields, Sunderland, Carlisle, and Leeds, such disturbances were especially formidable. Busy missionaries were traversing the country preaching the coming millennium when French principles would have triumphed; when property would be divided; when monarchy, aristocracy, and established Churches would all be at an end. The words 'Liberty and Equality' might be seen written up at the market places. Paine's 'Rights of Man,' published in a very cheap form, had an enormous circulation. Rich democrats or democratic societies were distributing it by hundreds gratuitously among the workmen of the manufacturing towns. It was widely circulated in Erse among the Scotch Highlanders and in Welsh among the mountains of Wales, and it was said that the soldiers were everywhere tam-

[1] Marsh's *History of Politics*, i. 203–212. Chauvelin described the festival of the 'Society of the Revolution of 1688'(at which he thought it prudent not to be present) as one of the grandest triumphs of liberty ever known in England. The toasts were all for France, the 'Marseillaise' was sung, an address to the Convention was voted unanimously, and more than 1,000 persons were unable to get admission into the crowded room. (To Lebrun, Nov. 12, 1792.)

[2] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 254.

pered with.[1] The country was full of foreigners, and many of them, in the opinion of the best judges, were engaged in the propagandism. In Paris the uniform language was that all royalty was tyranny, that the mission of France was to sweep it from the world, that French principles were to prepare the way for French arms by raising nations against their rulers.

The amount of attention which a Government may wisely pay to treasonable writing, speaking, or even action, is not a matter that can be settled by any general rule. It varies infinitely with the character and habits of the nation and with the spirit of the time, and certainly the closing months of 1792 were not a period in which these things could be looked upon with indifference. The manifestly expansive, subversive, and epidemical character of the French Revolution, the dangerous national ambitions that were wedded to it, and the great part which the propagandism of opinions and the establishment of affiliated societies had actually borne in attracting or facilitating invasion, could not reasonably be doubted. At the same time the Government shrank much from measures of repression. On November 14, Grenville wrote an interesting letter to his brother, who had accused him of negligence. He assured Buckingham that the ministers were not indifferent, or inobservant of what was passing, but they believed that the accounts of disturbances were much exaggerated, and that at all events the intervention of the Government should be only very sparingly and cautiously employed. 'If you look back,' he continued, 'to the last time in our history that these sort of things bore the same serious aspect that they now do—I mean the beginning of the Hanover reigns—you will find that the Protestant succession was established, not by the

[1] Wilberforce's *Life*, ii. 1–5. *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 469.

interference of a Secretary of State or Attorney-General in every individual instance, but by the exertions of every magistrate and officer, civil and military, throughout the country. . . . It is not unnatural, nor is it an unfavourable symptom, that people who are thoroughly frightened, as the body of landed gentlemen in this country are, should exaggerate these stories. . . . It is, however, not the less true that the danger exists. . . . The conquest of Flanders has, I believe, brought the business to a much nearer issue than any reasonable man could believe a month ago. The hands of the Government must be strengthened if the country is to be saved; but, above all, the work must not be left to the hands of Government, but every man must put his shoulder to it according to his rank and situation in life, or it will not be done.'[1]

It was impossible for English ministers not to be struck with the importance given in the French Convention to deputations from the most obscure English societies; with the manner in which the most obscure democratic addresses were officially published in France as the voice of the English people; with the honour of French citizenship ostentatiously conferred upon Priestley and Paine, and with the constant intercourse between the French representatives in England and the opponents of the Government. But a much more serious provocation was soon given by the decree of November 19, in which the French Convention, without drawing any distinction between hostile and neutral Governments, formally announced that the French nation would grant fraternity and assistance to all nations that desired to regain their liberty, and directed the Executive Power to order the French generals to put this decree into execution. In order that it should be universally

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 226–228.

known, the Convention commanded that it should be translated into all languages.

This decree in its obvious signification was an invitation to all nations to revolt against their rulers. In the new Parisian dialect, not only the most mitigated monarchy, but even aristocratic republics like Holland and Switzerland were tyrannies, and the French Government now pledged itself to assist revolted subjects by force of arms, even though their Governments had not given the smallest provocation to France. The decree was in perfect harmony with the language of the most conspicuous French politicians, and with the hopes or promises held out by French emissaries in many lands; but it was an interference with the internal affairs of other countries at least as gross as that which was committed by Lewis XIV. when he recognised the son of James II. as King of England. It was a provocation much more serious than the greater number of those which had produced wars during the eighteenth century.

It is quite certain, however, that the decree of November 19 if taken alone would never have induced Pitt to engage in hostilities with France. The attitude of the French Convention reluctantly convinced him of the necessity of taking special measures for the protection of order at home, but nothing short of grave and manifest external danger could provoke him to draw the sword.

In my own judgment, one of the most remarkable features in his foreign policy is the apathy or at least the quiescence with which he witnessed the French conquest of the Belgic Provinces. Ever since the English Revolution, it had been one of the first objects of English foreign policy to secure this tract of country from the dominion and the ascendency of France. Its invasion by Lewis XIV. first made the war of the Spanish succession inevitable. Its security had been

the main object of the Barrier Treaty, and we have already seen the importance attached to this point in the negotiations of 1789. If Pitt's father had been at the head of affairs, there can, I think, be little doubt that the entry of the French troops into the Belgic Provinces would have been immediately followed by English intervention. It is indeed true that one of the results of the recent policy of the Emperors had been that England no longer guaranteed the Austrian dominion in Flanders. Joseph II. by expelling the Dutch garrisons had torn the Barrier Treaty into shreds, and the Convention signed at the Hague in December 1790, by which Prussia and the maritime Powers guaranteed these provinces to Austria, had not been ratified, on account of the refusal of Leopold to grant the full and promised measure of their ancient liberties.[1] But although there was no treaty obligation, it was a matter of manifest political importance to England that Brussels, Ostend, and, above all, Antwerp, should not be in the hands of the French. All these had now been conquered, and although the French Government and their representatives in England had publicly disclaimed ideas of aggrandisement, although they represented the invasion of the Belgic Provinces as a mere matter of military necessity, and contented themselves as yet with decreeing that they should be for ever sundered from the Imperial rule, it needed but little foresight to perceive that, in the event of the final victory of France, they would remain French territory. Savoy was already formally incorporated into the French Republic. In Belgium, only a very few weeks had passed before the French, contrary to the wishes of the

[1] See Coxe's *House of Austria*, ii. 695–697. Prussia, as we have seen, afterwards guaranteed the Austrian Netherlands, but neither England nor Holland had done so.

people, began a general confiscation of ecclesiastical property, forced their *assignats* into circulation, and treated the country exactly as a French province.

There is a large amount of chance in the judgments which history ultimately forms of statesmen. If events had taken a somewhat different course, it is probable that Pitt's foreign policy would now have been chiefly censured for having, without an effort to prevent it, suffered the whole of Belgium to fall into the hands of France. But whether the acquiescence of the English Government was right or wrong, it at least furnished one more emphatic proof of the ardent desire of Pitt to avoid a war. The line which he adopted was perfectly clear. The invasion and conquest of Belgium he determined not to make a *casus belli*. The contingency of France retaining it in spite of her disclaimers was not yet brought into question. But England was connected with Holland by the closest and strictest alliance, and she had most formally guaranteed the existing Dutch Constitution. If therefore Holland and her Constitution were in real danger, England was bound, both in honour and policy, to draw the sword.

The justification or condemnation of English intervention in the great French war turns mainly upon this question. We have already seen that there had long existed in Holland a democratic and revolutionary party which was violently opposed to the House of Orange, which had been defeated by the efforts of Prussia and England, and which, before the French Revolution, had been in close alliance with France. We have seen also how bitterly the defeat of that party had been resented in Paris; how warmly its refugees were welcomed by the French Revolutionists, and how early the overthrow of the existing Dutch Constitution was spoken of as a possible result of the Revolution. In January 1792, a deputation of 'Dutch Patriots' had presented a petition

to the National Assembly, describing their plans for establishing liberty in Holland, and restricting the authority of the Stadholder, and requesting the favour of France, and the President had replied that the French people would always be their allies as long as they were the friends of liberty.[1] In the following June, Lord Gower mentioned to the English Government that the French intended to raise for their service a body of between three and four thousand Dutch patriots, and in the same month Grenville informed Gower that Lord Auckland had been writing from Holland 'that a project was supposed to be in agitation for an attack upon some of the Dutch ports from Dunkirk, by the legion of Dutch patriots now raising.' Gower at first regarded this report as wholly untrue, but he soon after wrote: 'I must retract my opinion that apprehensions entertained in Holland with regard to the Dutch legion are perfectly ill-founded. It was originally to have consisted of 4,250 men, but it is now to be augmented to 6,000.'[2]

The apprehensions of danger, however, in this quarter did not become acute until after the totally unexpected issue of the expedition of the Duke of Brunswick, and the triumphant invasion of the Austrian Netherlands. A great revolutionary army flushed with victory was now on the borders of Holland, and a rising of the 'Patriotic' party in that country might at any moment be expected.

Lord Auckland was then English minister at the Hague. On November 6—the day on which the battle of Jemmapes was fought—Grenville wrote him a confidential letter describing the extremely critical condition

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[1] *Annual Register*, 1792, pp. 352, 353.

[2] Gower to Grenville, June 22, 29; Grenville to Gower, June 12, 1792.

of Europe, and defining the course which the English Government intended to pursue. It was written in much the same strain as the almost contemporaneous letter to Lord Buckingham from which I have already quoted. 'I am every day,' he said, 'more and more confirmed in my opinion that, both in order to preserve our own domestic quiet and to secure some other parts, at least, of Europe free from the miseries of anarchy, this country and Holland ought to remain quiet as long as it is possible to do so, even with some degree of forbearance and tolerance beyond what would in other circumstances have been judged right.' It appears probable that the Austrians and Prussians will make another campaign against France, but in the opinion of Grenville 'the re-establishment of order in France can be effected only by a long course of intestine struggles,' and foreign intervention will only serve the cause of anarchy. English ministers consider that the best chance of preserving England from the dangers of the Revolution is to abstain resolutely from all interference with the struggle on the Continent, and they strongly recommend a similar course to the Dutch. 'Their local situation and the neighbourhood of Germany, Liége, and Flanders, may certainly render the danger more imminent, but it does not, I think, alter the reasoning as to the means of meeting it; and those means will, I think, be always best found in the preservation of the external peace of the Republic, and in that attention to its internal situation which external peace, alone, will allow its Government to give to that object.' The States-General desired to know what course the English Government would pursue if the Republican Government in France notified its establishment, and demanded to be acknowledged. Grenville answered that no step of this kind was likely to be taken till the new French Constitution was settled by the Assembly, and before that time the whole aspect

of affairs may have changed. If, however, contrary to his expectation, such a demand were at once made, it would probably be declined, but declined in such terms that England would be free to acknowledge the Republican Government in France at a later period, if such a Government should be fully established.[1]

A week later the danger had become far more imminent by the flight of the Austrian Government from Brussels, and it now appeared in the highest degree probable that the army of Dumouriez would speedily press on to Holland. Dutch 'patriots' were going over to him in great numbers, and it was reported that he had boasted that he would dine at the Hague on New Year's Day.[2] Under these circumstances the English ministers considered that in the interests of peace the time had come for England to depart from her system of absolute reserve, and they took two important steps, which we must now examine.

The first of these was to send to Lord Auckland a formal declaration which was to be presented to the States-General and to be made public, assuring Holland of the inviolable friendship of England and of her full determination to execute at all times, and with the utmost good faith, all the stipulations of the treaty of alliance she had entered into in 1788. The King is persuaded, the memorial said, that the strict neutrality, which the United Republic as well as England had kept, will be sufficient to save her from all danger of a violation of her territory or an interference on the part of either belligerent with her internal affairs. But as the theatre of war was now brought almost to the frontier of the Republic, and as much uneasiness had

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[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 464–467.

[2] This is mentioned in one of Lord Auckland's letters (Record Office) in the beginning of November.

naturally arisen, his Majesty thought it right to give the States-General this renewed assurance. He recommended them to repress firmly all attempts to disturb internal tranquillity, and he expressed his full belief that a close union between the two countries would contribute most effectually to the welfare of both and to the general tranquillity of Europe.[1]

We have letters both from Pitt and Grenville explaining the motives of this step.[2] Lord Auckland had represented, no doubt with great truth, the danger of Holland as extreme, and in the event either of an invasion or an insurrection England was bound to interfere. 'However unfortunate it would be,' wrote Pitt, 'to find this country in any shape committed, it seems absolutely impossible to hesitate as to supporting our ally in case of necessity, and the explicit declaration of our sentiments is the most likely way to prevent the case occurring.' Such a declaration appeared to the English Government the best measure for preventing either a rising in Holland or an infringement of the Dutch territory, and although it did not ultimately save Holland from invasion it is certain that it greatly strengthened the Dutch Government, and discouraged attempts at local insurrection.

It was plain, however, that unless the war in the Netherlands was speedily arrested, the chances of preserving the Dutch territory inviolate were infinitesimally small. On the same day, therefore, on which the English Government despatched their memorial to Holland, they sent instructions to the English ambassadors at Berlin and Vienna, directing them to break the silence on French affairs they had hitherto observed in their

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[1] *Annual Register*, 1792, pp. 352, 353.

[2] See the letter of Pitt in Rose's *Diaries and Correspondence*, i. 114–116, and the letter of Grenville to Auckland (in the Record Office) Nov. 13, 1792.

communications with those Courts. 'These instructions,' wrote Pitt, 'are necessarily in very general terms, as, in the ignorance of the designs of Austria and Prussia, and in the uncertainty as to what events every day may produce, it seems impossible to decide definitely at present on the line which we ought to pursue, except as far as relates to Holland. Perhaps some opening may arise which may enable us to contribute to the termination of the war between different Powers in Europe, leaving France (which I believe is the best way) to arrange its own internal affairs as it can. The whole situation, however, becomes so delicate and critical that I have thought it right to request the presence of all the members of the Cabinet who can without too much inconvenience give their attendance.'[1]

The letters of instruction to Eden and Keith are substantially the same, but a little more may be gleaned from the former than from the latter, as England was on much more intimate terms with Prussia than with Austria. The King, it was said, knows very little of the plans of the Courts of Prussia and Austria in France, or of their views of the termination of the war. 'His Majesty, having so repeatedly declined to make himself a party to that enterprise, forbore to urge for any more distinct explanation,' but 'the unforeseen events which have arisen, and most particularly the success of the French arms in Flanders, have now brought forward considerations in which the common interests and engagements of his Majesty and the King of Prussia are deeply concerned.' There are grave reasons to fear 'for the security and tranquillity of the United Provinces,' and the King now asks for confidential communications

[1] Rose's *Diaries*, i. 115. This letter is addressed to the Marquis of Stafford. It is curious as showing how little the attendance of all the members of the Cabinet seems to have been considered a matter of course.

from the Court of Berlin. His object is, if possible, to assist in 'putting an end to a business so unfortunate for all those who have been engaged in it, and which threatens in its consequences to disturb the tranquillity of the rest of Europe.' Eden, however, is to be extremely cautious 'not to commit this Court to any opinion with respect to the propriety and practicability of any particular mode' of effecting this object. He may say that, as the King knows nothing about the plans of the two Courts, he could give no instructions, and if he finds that the Prussian King is reluctant to make communications, he is at once to drop the subject.[1]

It cannot be said that in these very cautious proceedings the English Government in any way departed from its neutrality, nor can they, I think, be regarded as at all in excess of what the danger of the situation warranted. Scarcely a day now passed which did not bring disquieting intelligence. From Zealand and from Ostend, it was reported that the French meant to send a squadron to force the passage of the Scheldt, and the rumour obtained some confirmation when two French gunboats appeared on the coast of Holland. It was at first said that they came to buy horses, but the commander soon asked the Dutch Government on the part of Dumouriez for permission to sail up the Scheldt for the purpose of assisting in reducing the town and citadel of Antwerp, though he must have well known that the Dutch could not grant such permission without a plain violation of their neutrality. There were reports from Breda of an intended insurrectionary movement. There were fears of complications from the crowds of emigrants who were now pouring into Hol-

[1] Grenville to Eden, Nov. 13. See, too, Grenville to Keith, Nov. 13, 1792.

land from Liége and Brabant. There was a question whether it would not be advisable at once to send English ships of war to Flushing. Staremberg, the Austrian minister, succeeded in bribing one of the officials of the French embassy, and, by his means, obtaining a copy of a confidential letter from Dumouriez to De Maulde, the French minister at the Hague. In this letter, Dumouriez promised that he would try to prevent the recall of De Maulde, and he added: 'I count upon carrying liberty to the Batavians, as I have already done to the Belgians, and the Revolution will be accomplished in Holland in such a manner that things will be brought back to the point in which they were in 1788.'

Auckland believed this letter to be certainly genuine, but he did not despair of peace, nor did he think that the time had yet come when it was necessary to send English ships to Flushing. It was important, he said, to avoid giving signs of apprehension or distrust, though he would be glad to know that there was some English naval force in the Downs which could be forthcoming at short notice. The season of the year was very unfavourable for invasion. 'Those who ought to know best the interior of this country,' he wrote, 'continue to assure me that they see no immediate ground of alarm, and the exterior will, for the present, be (I hope) defended by nature and by the seasons. It would have a great effect, and might possibly save mankind from a deluge of general confusion and misery, if the loyalty and good sense of England could be roused into a manifestation of abhorrence of the wickedness and folly of the levelling doctrines.' Possibly the English Government might even now be able to arrange the preliminaries of a general pacification of Europe.[1]

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Nov. 23, 25, 1792.

Grenville also took at first a somewhat hopeful view. While sending Auckland alarming reports which he had received from Ostend, he expressed his belief that they were exaggerated, though they must not be neglected. He rejoiced to hear that the English declaration of friendship to Holland had a good effect, and hoped that Auckland would do all in his power to sustain confidence. 'I am strongly inclined,' he wrote, 'to believe that it is the present intention of the prevailing party in France to respect the rights of this country and of the Republic, but it will undoubtedly be necessary that the strictest attention should be given to any circumstance which may seem to indicate a change in this respect.' It was impossible, however, to disguise the fact that the prospect was full of the gravest danger and uncertainty, and the demands of the commander of the French ships of war seemed to indicate a plain desire to force on a quarrel. Such preparations as could be made without attracting much notice, had already been made in England. All hemp in England had been bought by the Government lest it should be exported to France, and Grenville recommended a similar measure to the Dutch. The French appeared to have as yet imported little hemp, and might therefore have difficulty in equipping their navy. The Government did not at present think it wise to send an English fleet either to Flushing or to the Downs.[1]

The fury of the thunderstorm is less trying to the nerves of men than the sultry, oppressive, and ominous calm that precedes it; and it was through such a calm that England was now passing. To the last letter from which I have quoted, Grenville appended a postscript announcing proceedings in Paris which at last convinced him that war was inevitable. On November 16,

[1] Grenville to Auckland, Nov. 23, 25, 26, 1792.

the Executive Council at Paris adopted two memorable resolutions abolishing as contrary to the laws of nature the treaty rights of the Dutch to the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt and of the Meuse, and ordering the commanders of the French armies to continue to pursue the Austrians, even upon the territory of Holland, if they retired there. Three days later the Convention passed its decree, promising French assistance to all nations that revolted against their rulers.

The last of these measures has already been considered. Its significance, at a time when there was a triumphant French army in Austrian Flanders, and a defeated but still powerful party in Holland which was notoriously hostile to the House of Orange and notoriously in sympathy with France, was too manifest to be mistaken. The decree of November 19 was obviously intended to rekindle the civil war which had so lately been extinguished, and it made it almost certain that even the most partial insurrection would be immediately made the pretext for a French invasion. The direction given to the French commander to pursue the Austrians if they retired into Dutch territory was a flagrant violation of the laws of nations, while the opening of the Scheldt was a plain violation of the treaty rights of the Dutch. Their sovereignty over that river dated from the Peace of Westphalia, by which the independence of Holland was first recognised. It had been confirmed by the treaty of 1785, in which France herself acted as guarantee;[1] and it was one of those rights which England, by the treaty of alliance in 1788, was most formally bound to defend. It would be impossible to conceive a more flagrant or more dangerous violation of treaties than this action of the French. It implied that they were absolute sovereigns of the

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 47; Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 194–98.

Austrian Netherlands, for these provinces alone were interested in the question. It established a precedent which, if it were admitted, would invalidate the whole public law of Europe, for it assumed that the most formal treaties were destitute of all binding force if they appeared in the light of the new French philosophy to be contrary to the laws of nature or 'remnants of feudal servitude;' and the decree of the French Executive was confirmed by the Convention, immediately after the memorial to the Dutch States-General, by which England had pledged herself in the most formal manner to fulfil all the obligations she had assumed by the treaty of 1788. Nor was it possible to say that the measure was of no practical importance. Its immediate object was to enable the French to send ships of war to attack the citadel of Antwerp. If the Dutch acceded to the demand in spite of the protest of the Imperial minister, they would at once be forced out of their neutrality. But beyond this, if the navigation of the Scheldt was open to armed vessels, it would enable the French, as the Dutch truly said, to carry their troops into the heart of Holland. A great French army was already on its border. Refugees from Holland had been enrolled by thousands; there were sufficient small boats collected at Ostend to transport an army; and there was an active French party in Holland itself. Could it be questioned that the opening of the Scheldt formed a leading part of a plan for the conquest of Holland? Could it be doubted that if the mouth of the river passed into French hands it would, in the event of a war, give great facilities for an attack upon England?

It is impossible, I think, to consider all the circumstances of the case without concluding that the decree was an act of gross and deliberate provocation, that it was part of a system of policy which plainly aimed at the conquest of Holland, and that England could not

acquiesce in it with any regard either for her honour or her interests. The last assertion has indeed been denied on the ground that Joseph II. had attempted to carry a similar measure in 1785 and that England had remained passive. But this argument is obviously futile. England was at that time not in alliance with Holland; she had but just made peace with her after a long war, and the act of Joseph was not one which in any way affected English interests, for Austria never had any maritime force, and could not, under any circumstances, become a danger to England.

All the proceedings of the French only conspired to deepen the impression which the decrees of November 16 and 19 had produced. A letter written by Clavière, a member of the French Executive Council, was intercepted, in which he wrote that if Holland wished to live at peace with France she must take care to receive no Prussians or Austrians into any part of her territory, for the Republic would leave 'neither truce nor repose in any quarter to her enemies either secret or open.'[1] When Dumouriez conquered Liége, the French general Eustache[2] appeared at the gates of Maestricht, one of the strongest frontier towns of the United Provinces, and he sent a message to the Prince of Hesse, who commanded, demanding that 15,000 French soldiers might pass through the town. The Prince replied that to give such permission would be contrary to the Dutch neutrality. Eustache rejoined in a menacing letter, stating that he had two objects, to express the fraternal disposition of the French Republic towards the Republic of Holland, and to recommend the Governor at once to expel from Maestricht all the enemies of France. He

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[1] Auckland to Grenville, Nov. 27, 1792.

[2] Though in the French service, he was by birth an American, and wrote in English. Ibid. Dec. 18, 1792.

would be sorry, he said, to act with violence, but his orders were strict and formal, 'to punish as the enemies of the French Republic all the protectors of the Austrians and of the emigrants.' The Dutch persisted in refusing to allow the French to enter Maestricht, and Eustache soon dropped his demand, but the whole episode was a characteristic and alarming illustration of the manner in which the Republic was disposed to treat neutral Powers.[1] It is now known that at this time an immediate invasion of Holland was fully intended by Dumouriez, but at the last moment the Executive Council shrank from a step which would at once produce a war with England.[2]

Still more serious was the conduct of the commanders of the French war-ships at the mouth of the Scheldt. The Dutch took the only course which was possible consistently with their neutrality, and refused the permission that was asked ; but the French vessels sailed up the Scheldt to Antwerp in defiance of their prohibition.[3]

There were at the same time evident efforts made to stimulate the French party in Holland. A report was industriously propagated 'that the disposition of the people of England is become such as to put it out of the power of his Majesty's Government to give in any event any species of succour' to Holland,[4] and Lord Auckland stated that it was known with certainty that large sums had been expended by the French Executive Council for the purpose of exciting simultaneous insurrections in the great towns of England and in Holland.[5] Auckland expressed his perfect confidence that in England this

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 2, 4, 1792.

[2] *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, iii. 380 ; Morris's *Letters ; Works*, ii. 254.

[3] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 4, 1792.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid. Dec. 7, 1792.

plan would be foiled, but, he added, 'in this Republic the case is different. . . . The animosities which were necessarily created by the transactions of 1787 have not yet subsided, and are now combined with the wild democratic notions of the day, and are encouraged by the example of the Austrian Netherlands and the near neighbourhood and multiplied successes of the French armies. I nevertheless hope that interior tranquillity may (for the present at least) be maintained.' The Prince of Orange one day hastily summoned Auckland, and assured him that he had received intelligence that Dumouriez had actually sent orders from Antwerp for a descent upon Holland, which was to be the signal for an insurrection. De Maulde, he was informed, had pointed out on the map the places at which the French meant to penetrate into Holland, adding that it was all Dumouriez's doing, that, for his own part, he thought it very imprudent, and that in fifteen days all communication with England would be stopped.[1]

De Maulde was suddenly and unexpectedly recalled by his Government and replaced by a man named Tainville, a violent Jacobin, 'of brutal manners and evident indiscretion.' The first act of his mission was 'to make himself the colporteur' of an incendiary work of Condorcet entitled 'Adresse aux Bataves,' which he brought with him.[2]

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[1] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 5, 7, 1792.

[2] Ibid. Dec. 7, 1792. Lord Stormont afterwards quoted in the House of Lords the following passage from this production of Condorcet, which gives an idea of its character: 'So long as the earth is stained by the existence of a king, and by the absurdity of hereditary government, so long as this shameful production of ignorance and folly remains unproscribed by the universal consent of mankind, union between free states is their primary want, their dearest interest. George III. sees, with anxious surprise, that throne totter under him which is founded on sophistry, and which Republican truths have sapped to its very foundation.'—Adolphus, v. 238.

De Maulde was by no means inclined to acquiesce patiently in his dismissal, and Auckland was present at his farewell interview with the Dutch Pensionary. De Maulde, he says, burst out into a violent invective against his Government, but still believed that Dumouriez would protect him and maintain him in Holland. Referring to a former conference with Auckland, he expressed his hope that the English minister's views of a pacification were unchanged. Auckland answered that a month ago he individually would have gladly promoted a peace on the basis even of an acknowledgment of the French Republic, provided the royal family were put in security and well treated, but that now everything was changed. Savoy was annexed. Flanders, Brabant, Liége, and the districts on the Rhine were undergoing the same fate. A war of unprovoked depredation was carried on against the Italian States. The Dutch Republic had been insulted by the *arrêté* relating to the Scheldt, and the Convention had passed a decree nearly tantamount to a declaration of war against every kingdom in Europe. De Maulde said little in reply; but when he was sounded as to the views of Dumouriez he expressed a wish to go to that general, and bring back a full account, as soon as his letters from Paris enabled him to settle his pecuniary matters. 'The Pensionary,' Auckland says, 'understood what was meant; I said nothing, and left them together.' The result was that Auckland agreed to 'lend' De Maulde five hundred pounds, and the Pensionary would probably do more, in order that the French envoy might go to Dumouriez and might furnish them with useful intelligence. Auckland and the Pensionary both believed that by De Maulde, and by a certain Joubert who was in their pay,[1] full information might be obtained

[1] It appears from subsequent letters that Joubert was De Maulde's secretary.

respecting the conduct and plans of the 'patriots.' 'It is hateful and disgusting work,' Auckland added, 'to have any concern with such instruments, and the Pensionary, who has been so good as to relieve me from the whole detail, seems to suffer under it.'[1]

The channels of information which were opened proved very useful. Three days after the last letter Auckland wrote that he had procured, 'at a moderate expense,' the French minister's instructions and part of his ministerial correspondence. These documents he considered so important that he did not venture to trust them to his secretary or clerk, but copied them out with his own hand. The instructions of De Maulde were dated August 25, 1792, at a time when orders were sent for the first invasion of Brabant and Flanders. Their purport was that the first object of French policy in Holland should be to encourage secretly the 'patriots' opposed to the Stadholder, to keep up relations with them and to encourage them to look forward to French assistance. This must, however, be done cautiously, for a 'premature revolution in Holland might draw down upon us all the forces of England and Prussia.' There could be no longer any question that a revolution in Holland had, from the very beginning of the campaign in Flanders, been a fixed object of the governing party in Paris, and many of the letters of the 'patriots' to the French minister at the same time fell into the hands of Auckland. They were on the whole reassuring, for they showed 'rather a mischievous disposition than a formed design.'[2]

A few days later, a German, travelling with a passport from the magistrates of Amsterdam, was arrested at Utrecht, and he was found to be the bearer of a

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[1] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 10, 1792.
[2] Ibid. Dec. 13, 1792.

packet of letters to Dumouriez. Most of them were of little importance, but among them were three papers of the highest consequence. There was a long letter from De Maulde giving a very detailed plan for an invasion of Holland through Arnhem, and concluding 'that, unless Holland could be wrested from England, there would be no security for France under any pacification.' There was a letter from Tainville, the successor of De Maulde, urging Dumouriez to come forward and 'relieve the friends of Freedom and of France from a tyrannical aristocracy,' and there was a plan of invasion drawn up by a French officer who was a prisoner for debt at Amsterdam.[1]

De Maulde, almost immediately after this arrest, had an interview with Auckland, at which he talked very pacifically, and he appears to have been wholly unconscious that his despatch was intercepted. Auckland was inclined to believe that he did not really wish for an invasion, as he was looking forward to personal advantages from services to be rendered during the winter, which would be interrupted if it took place. The intercepted letter, he thought, was probably part of a plan, perhaps a concerted plan, for giving an impression of his zeal. He was confirmed in this impression by a later intercepted despatch addressed to Paris. It was full of falsehoods in its account of what had taken place, but it appeared to Auckland to lean towards peace, for it represented both England and Holland as desiring it, and suggested that it might be inexpedient to draw down these Powers and possibly also Spain upon France.[2]

It was impossible to deny the extremely critical nature of the situation, and the evident intention to

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 21, 1792.
[2] Ibid. Dec. 21, 27, 1792.

invade Holland, but on the whole Auckland even now took a sanguine view. The condition of the French Republic seemed so precarious, the madness of provoking England to war was so manifest, the season so unfavourable for invasion, and the continued internal tranquillity of Holland so reassuring, that he had always hoped that the storm might pass. 'I am more than ever convinced,' he wrote, at the end of November, 'that if this Republic and England can keep out of the confusion for a few months, a great part of the danger will cease.'[1] 'We cannot doubt,' he wrote a week later, 'that it has been the intention to attempt an invasion of some part of this Republic by troops and vessels from Antwerp, and we have reason to apprehend that the project is not yet laid aside. Such an enterprise, if we could rely on the interior of the Provinces, would be contemptible, and, even under the present fermentation, at this season of the year it would be rash in the extreme; but M. Dumouriez, with such a crowd of adventurers at his disposal, may be capable of risking the loss of 4,000 or 5,000.' The effect of the arrival of some English ships of war in Holland he now thought might be very great. 'It is possible that the whole end might be answered if any one or more of the number could arrive soon, and the necessity might perhaps cease before the remainder can quit the English ports. . . . If (as I incline to hope) nothing hostile should happen, their stay would be very short, and the impression of such an attention would have a great and permanent effect.'[2] 'I know,' he wrote some time later, 'that the postponing of the war is unfashionable in England, but I lean towards it from a belief that France is exhausted by her expenses, and may suddenly

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Nov. 27, 1792.
[2] Ibid. Dec. 4, 1792.

fall to pieces if our attack should not excite a paroxysm of desperation which may prove very dangerous.'[1]

It was plain that the time had fully come for England to take a decided part, and an important despatch of Lord Grenville, dated December 4, and written immediately after he had been informed of the demand of the French to enter Maestricht, showed the light in which the English Government regarded the situation. 'The conduct of the French,' he wrote, 'in all these late proceedings, appears to his Majesty's servants to indicate a fixed and settled design of hostility against this country and the Republic. The demand that the Dutch should suffer their rights, guaranteed to them by France, to be set aside by the decree of the Convention, and the neutrality of their territory to be violated to the prejudice of Austria; the similar demand for a passage through Maestricht, in contradiction to every principle of the law of nations, particularly those so much relied on by France in the case of the German Princes; the recent decree authorising the French generals to pursue their enemies into any neutral territory; that by which the Convention appears to have promised assistance and support to the disturbers of any established Government in any country, explained and exemplified as it is by the almost undisguised attempts now making on their part to incite insurrections here and in Holland; all these things afford strong proofs of their disposition, independently even of the offensive manner in which the conduct and situation of the neutral nations has recently been treated, even in the communications of the ministers themselves to the Convention.' Under these circumstances, his Majesty has thought it necessary to arm, and he hopes that Holland will do the same. 'The King is decidedly

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 21, 1792.

of opinion that the Republic should persist in her refusal to admit the passage of the French troops through any part of her territory. While the neutrality of the Republic was beneficial to France, his Majesty uniformly recommended an adherence to it, and to depart from that principle now would be to give to the Court of Vienna the justest ground of complaint, and even a legitimate cause of war. Whatever may be the consequence, the King is of opinion that the Republic can maintain its independence only by observing the same line of conduct in the present case which it has uniformly maintained in all the different circumstances which have hitherto arisen. At the same time . . . the King has thought it right not to omit such steps as could conduce to a pacific explanation,' and he has accordingly expressed his full readiness to receive privately and unofficially any agent the French might send, though he would not receive him publicly and officially.[1]

The conviction that a war with France was inevitable, and the conviction that it was necessary to take some decisive steps to stop the active correspondence of English democratic societies with Paris, had now fully forced themselves on the English ministers. It was on November 28 that the deputation from the English societies appeared at the bar of the Convention, congratulating that body in the name of the English people on 'the triumphs of Liberty,' predicting that other nations would soon follow in the same 'career of useful changes,' and declaring that the example of France had made revolutions so easy that addresses of congratulation might soon be sent to 'a National Convention of England.' I have quoted the enthusiastic language in which the President of the Convention wel-

[1] Grenville to Auckland, Dec. 4, 1792.

comed his 'fellow-Republicans' from England, and the confident arrogance with which he announced the speedy downfall of all the monarchies of Europe.[1] On December 1, the English Government replied by a proclamation calling out the militia, on the ground that 'the utmost industry is still employed by evil-disposed persons within this kingdom, acting in concert with persons in foreign parts, with a view to subvert the laws and established constitution of this realm. . . . that a spirit of tumult and disorder thereby excited has lately shown itself in acts of riot and insurrection,' and that it was therefore necessary to strengthen the force which may be in readiness to support the civil magistrate. By a second proclamation, the meeting of Parliament was accelerated, and it was summoned for December 13.[2]

Great military and naval activity now prevailed in England. A powerful fleet was prepared for the Downs. Ships of war were put under orders for Flushing, and inquiries were made into the possibility, in case of war, of attacking Guadaloupe, Martinique, and St. Lucia.[3] Some information had been obtained which made the Government seriously anxious for the safety of the Tower and of the City; strenuous measures were taken for their protection,[4] and the necessity for a considerable increase both in the army and navy was one of the first reasons assigned for the immediate assembly of Parliament.

Even before Parliament met, it was becoming evident that the schism in the Opposition was deepening. Lord Malmesbury relates that at two dinners of Whig

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[1] Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 203–212.

[2] Ibid. i. 260–262.

[3] See a curious minute of an interview between Lord Hawkesbury and a gentleman from Guadaloupe, Dec. 5, 1792 (French Correspondence in the Record Office).

[4] Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 222–227; Buckingham's *Memoirs*, ii. 230, 231.

leaders which were held at Burlington House to discuss the policy of the party, Fox declared that the alarm was totally groundless; that there was not only no insurrection or imminent danger of invasion, but even no unusual symptom of discontent, and that for his own part he was determined to oppose the calling out of the militia. 'None of the company,' Lord Malmesbury says, 'agreed with him.' 'No one, not even Fox himself, called in doubt the necessity of assisting the Dutch if attacked, but *he*, and *he* only, seemed inclined to think the opening of the Scheldt was not a sufficient motive. . . . His principles, too, bore the strongest marks of a leaning towards Republicanism.' The Duke of Portland, and other leaders of the party, wished that in the dangerous condition of the country nothing should be done to enfeeble the Government or impair the impression of unanimity, and that therefore no amendment should be moved to the address. Fox put an end to all discussion by declaring, with an oath, 'that there was no address at this moment Pitt could frame, he would not propose an amendment to, and divide the House upon.'[1]

The King's Speech emphatically recalled the fidelity with which the English Government, as well as the States-General, had observed their policy of neutrality during the war, and their complete abstention from all interference with the internal affairs of France. It was impossible, however, for the King to witness without the most serious uneasiness 'the strong and increasing indications' of an intention to 'excite disturbances in other countries, to disregard the rights of neutral nations, and to pursue views of conquest and aggrandisement;' and the French had taken measures towards Holland which were 'neither conformable to

[1] Malmesbury's *Diaries and Correspondence*, ii. 473–475.

the laws of nations nor to the positive stipulations of existing treaties.' In addition to calling out the militia and augmenting the army and navy, the Government thought it necessary to introduce an Alien Bill, placing for a short time all foreigners in England under the supervision of the Government, prohibiting them from bringing into the country arms or ammunition, and authorising the Government, if necessary, to expel them from the kingdom.

Pitt was not present at the first few debates of the Session. He had just received from the King the lucrative office of Warden of the Cinque Ports, and had not yet been re-elected, and the chief part in opposing Fox was taken by Windham, who had now decisively separated himself from his former leader, and who strenuously maintained the necessity for the measures of precaution which the Government recommended. The first speeches of Fox were in the highest degree violent and incendiary. In public, as in private,[1] he set no bounds to his exultation at the defeat of Brunswick, or to his insulting language when speaking of the two Powers with which England was likely to be soon in alliance, and he entirely blamed the reserve which the English Government had hitherto maintained. 'From the moment they knew a league was formed against France,' he said, 'this country ought to have interfered. France had justice completely on her side, and we, by a prudent negotiation with the other Powers, might have prevented the horrid scenes which were afterwards exhibited. . . . Thank God, Nature had been true to herself, tyranny had been defeated, and those who had fought for freedom were triumphant!' The King's Speech had said that 'the industry employed to excite discontent on various pretexts and in different

[1] See Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 372.

parts of the kingdom has appeared to proceed from a desire to attempt the destruction of our happy Constitution and the subversion of all order and government;' and the Lord Mayor of London had said, with incontestable truth, that societies were formed in London under pretence of merely discussing constitutional questions, but with the real object of propagating seditious doctrines. 'By this new scheme of tyranny,' said Fox, 'we are not to judge of the conduct of men by their overt acts, but are to arrogate to ourselves at once the providence and the power of the Deity, to arraign a man for his secret thoughts, and to punish him because we choose to believe him guilty!' Pursuing this strain, he proceeded, in a long declamatory passage, which was not innocuous, although it was astonishingly absurd, to accuse the English Government of meditating, not only the destruction of the Constitution, but also a system of cruelty and oppression worse than any devised by the See of Rome, or the Spanish Inquisition, or any other tyrant, spiritual or temporal.[1]

This was the kind of language employed in a momentous crisis of English history by the leader of one of the great parties in the State. Fox, however, though he could be one of the most reckless and declamatory of demagogues, was also one of the most skilful of debaters, and as the discussion proceeded, and as it became evident that the dominant sentiment even on his own side of the House was decidedly against him, his language grew more moderate and plausible. French Revolutionists ceased to appear as angels of light and freedom. He spoke with much and probably with sincere horror[2] of the approaching murder of the

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 18, 19, 60, 61.

[2] I have already noticed the letters Fox wrote to Barnave and other politicians in France in favour of the King, after the failure of the flight of Varennes. See vol. vi. pp. 510, 511.

King. He declared that the progress of the French arms in the Low Countries was justly alarming to Europe, and might be dangerous to England, that the spirit which under Lewis XIV. menaced the liberties of Europe might influence, and actually had influenced, the conduct of the French, and although he opposed the calling out of the militia, he cordially supported the augmentation of the army and navy. To any measures restricting the proceedings of democratic societies at home, he was inexorably opposed, and he urged that the proper way of combating discontent was to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, to reform the Parliament, and to emancipate the Irish Catholics. He acknowledged reluctantly, that if the Dutch called on us to treat the opening of the Scheldt as a *casus fœderis* we were bound to do so, but he denied that they had done so. He attributed the hostility of the English Government towards the Government of France to the fact that France was an 'unanointed Republic,' and he declared that if there was a war it would be a war 'of punctilio.' 'It is the true policy of every nation to treat with the existing Government of every other nation with which it has relative interests, without inquiring or regarding how that Government is constituted and by what means those who exercise it came into power.' His advice was that we should at once recognise the French Republic, send an ambassador to Paris to treat with it, and in this way avert if possible the great calamity of war.

This policy was, however, entirely repudiated, not only by the habitual followers of the ministry and by Burke, but also by the Duke of Portland, by Windham, by Sir Gilbert Elliot, by Thomas Grenville, and by the large majority of those who usually followed Fox. The serious amount of dangerous sedition in England; the constant encouragement of that sedition by the French;

the necessity of putting an end to the perpetual treasonable correspondence of English societies with the French Convention; the extreme danger of Holland; the gross, wanton, and repeated provocation which had been offered to this old ally of England, appeared to the immense majority of the House of Commons abundantly proved. The present, it was said, was no time for entering into a course of extended internal reforms, which might easily be made the pretext or the instrument of revolution, and it was perfectly certain that no reform short of a total subversion of the mixed Constitution of England would satisfy the zealots of the new French creed. It was wholly untrue that the present attitude of the English Government towards France was due to the fact that she was a republic. The relations of England to Holland, Switzerland, Genoa, and Venice were perfectly amicable. But 'these were not regicidal republics, nor republics of confraternity with the seditious and disaffected in every State.' Was it reasonable, it was asked, to expect the King of England to send an ambassador to France at a time when France had still no settled administration or Government; when the French Convention had just declared its implacable hatred of all kings and of all monarchical institutions; when it had been receiving and encouraging seditious Englishmen, who had come over to complain of the Constitution of their own country, and to seek for an alliance to subvert it; when a decree had gone forth from Paris which was a general declaration against all existing Governments, and an invitation to universal revolt; when the rulers of France were on the eve of crowning a long series of confiscations and murders by the murder of their inoffensive sovereign? It would be an eternal disgrace to the British Empire, it was said, if England at this time sent an ambassador to Paris, for by doing so she would not only be the first nation in

Europe to recognise a Government created by a train of atrocious crimes, but would also be looked upon as giving her countenance to the horrid deed which was manifestly impending. Such a policy would result in 'the complete alienation of those Powers with which England was at present allied,' and by giving the whole weight of the character of England to France at a time when France was endeavouring to arm the subjects of every kingdom against their rulers, it would place all Europe in a deplorable situation. No nation had ever observed neutrality in difficult circumstances more strictly or scrupulously than England. She had given France no provocation whatever. She had again and again declared her resolution to meddle in no way with her internal concerns, and she tolerated in the country an unofficial representative who was perfectly competent to discharge any duties of negotiation that might arise. Nor was there, in truth, any question of difficulty or complexity impending. The whole danger rose from acts of patent and wilful provocation on the part of France; from her pretension to set aside the plainest and most formal treaties on the ground 'that they were extorted by avarice and consented to by despotism;' from her ceaseless efforts to foment rebellion in other countries, and from the ungovernable ambition with which she was disturbing the equilibrium of Europe.

Such was, in a few words, the substance of the rival arguments in the debates in the first weeks of the Session. There can be no question that the Government carried with them the immense preponderance of opinion, both within the House and beyond its walls. Fox's amendment on the Address was negatived by 290 to 50, and in the opinion of Lord Malmesbury a full half of this small minority consisted of men who, through personal attachment to Fox, voted in opposition to their

genuine sentiments.[1] His motion for sending a minister to France was negatived, and the Alien Bill was carried without a division. Measures were at the same time carried, prohibiting the circulation in England of French *assignat* bonds, and enabling the King to prohibit the export of naval stores.

While these measures were passing through Parliament, several important events were occurring on the Continent. It was already evident that the declarations of the French, that they sought no conquests, and that they would not interfere with the free expression of the will of the inhabitants of the Austrian Netherlands, were mere idle words. Although there was a revolutionary party in Flanders, and especially in the bishopric of Liége, it soon became plain that the general wish of the population of these countries did not extend beyond the re-establishment of their ancient constitution; that they clung tenaciously to their old local privileges, customs, and independence, and that they had not the least wish to see the destruction of their Church or of their nobility. But the French had not been many weeks in the Austrian Netherlands before they proceeded to treat them as a portion of France, to introduce the *assignats*, to confiscate the Church property, to abolish all privileges, and to remould the whole structure of society according to the democratic type.

In the famous decree of December 15, the National Convention proclaimed its policy in terms which could not be misunderstood. 'Faithful to the principles of the sovereignty of the people, which will not permit them to acknowledge any of the institutions militating against it,' they ordered that, in every country which was occupied by French arms, the French commander should at once proclaim the sovereignty of

[1] Malmesbury's *Diaries*, ii. 476.

the people, the suppression of all existing authorities, the abolition of all existing taxes, of the tithes, of the nobility, and of all privileges. The people were to be convoked to create provisional administrations, from which, however, all the civil and military agents and officers of the former Government and all members of the lately privileged classes and corporations must be excluded. If, however, as in the case of Flanders, the people of the occupied country preferred their old form of government, the course to be pursued was clearly laid down. 'The French nation will treat as enemies the people who, refusing or renouncing liberty and equality, are desirous of preserving their prince and privileged castes, or of entering into accommodation with them. The nation promises and engages never to lay down its arms until the sovereignty and liberty of the people on whose territory the French armies shall have entered shall be established, and not to consent to any arrangement or treaty with the princes or privileged persons so dispossessed, with whom the Republic is at war.' The Convention added a commentary to this decree, in which its intentions were still more emphatically asserted. 'It is evident,' they said, 'that a people so enamoured of its chains, and so obstinately attached to its state of brutishness as to refuse the restoration of its rights, is the accomplice not only of its own despots but even of all the crowned usurpers, who divide the domain of the earth and of men. Such a servile people is the declared enemy, not only of the French Republic, but even of all other nations, and therefore the distinction which we have so justly established between Government and people ought not to be observed in its favour.' Such a people must, therefore, be treated 'according to the rigour of war and of conquest.'[1]

[1] Marsh, ch. xii.; *Annual Register*, 1792, part ii. pp. 358–360; Bourgoing, *Hist. Dipl.* i. deuxième partie, pp. 268–272.

The decree excited fierce discontent in the Belgic provinces, but petitions and protests were unavailing, and the Convention sent commissioners, among whom Danton was the most conspicuous, to carry their wishes into execution. While, however, France was thus verifying the predictions of Burke by proclaiming that the war was essentially a war of revolutionary propagandism, and while by this proclamation she stimulated into new energy the many revolutionary clubs and centres that were scattered throughout Europe, a few reverses checked the hitherto unbroken success of her arms. The attempt which had already been made to make a separate peace with Prussia at the expense of the Emperor was resumed in the early winter of 1792,[1] but it had no result, and a combined army of Prussians and Hessians easily drove the small army of Custine out of Germany. He was compelled to evacuate Frankfort in the beginning of December, and a month later he recrossed the Rhine. An attempt which was made by Beurnonville, at the head of the army of the Moselle, to seize Coblentz and Trèves in the middle of December was defeated by the Austrians, and a descent upon Sardinia which followed the expedition to Naples proved a total failure.

The letters which Grenville had addressed on November 13 to the English ambassadors at Vienna and Berlin, inviting confidential communications, were answered with a vagueness which might have been perplexing to the English ministers, if the clue to the riddle had not been furnished by their representatives. It is to be found in the Polish question, which was now absorbing the attention of the German Powers, almost to the exclusion of French affairs. We have already seen the

[1] Sybel, ii. 40–42.

first stages of the plots against Poland which were concocted in the Courts of St. Petersburg and Berlin, and the hopeless impotence to which Poland had been reduced. Her military resources were utterly incapable of meeting the powerful enemies that hemmed her in. Her frontier was almost defenceless. The spirit of her peasantry was broken by repeated Russian invasions and occupations. Her new constitution, though it appeared to the malevolent perspicacity of her neighbours likely to give her order, stability, and prosperity, had not yet time to take any root, and she was completely isolated in Europe. France and Turkey were her two oldest allies; but France had neither the power nor the disposition to interfere for her protection, while Turkey, having but just emerged from an exhausting war, was certain to remain quiescent. But the greatest calamity was the death of the Emperor Leopold. That very able sovereign had regarded the independence and power of Poland as one of the leading elements of European stability, and while he lived he was likely to have the strongest influence in the coalition that had been formed. He died, leaving his empire to an ignorant boy, without a policy or any strength of intellect or will. The policy of Russia towards Poland was one of cynical, undisguised rapacity, and as soon as she had seen the two German Powers engaged in the war with France, she proceeded to put her plans into execution. At the end of May an army of 60,000 Russians crossed the Polish frontier, and in spite of some brave resistance from Kosciusko, they entered Warsaw in the beginning of August.[1]

The course of events depended largely on the King

[1] Hailes to Grenville, May 22, 30, June 27, July 25, August 8, 1792.

of Prussia. That Sovereign, as we have seen, had first induced the Poles to assert their independence of Russia. He had himself urged them to amend their constitution. He had been the first to congratulate them on the constitutional reform of May 1791. He had bound himself before God and man, by two solemn and recent treaties, to respect the integrity of Poland; to defend the integrity of Poland against all enemies; to oppose by force any attempt to interfere with her internal affairs. Yet, as we have also seen, he had resolved as early as March 1792, not only to break his word and to betray his trust, but also to take an active part in the partition of the defenceless country which he had bound himself in honour to protect. By this means the territorial aggrandisement at which he had long been aiming might be attained.

The full extent of the treachery was only gradually disclosed, and the very instructive letters which Eden sent from Berlin enable us to complete a story which is one of the most shameful and most melancholy in the eighteenth century. At the end of May he relates a conversation with Schulenburg which fully confirmed him in his previous opinion that Poland must rely on its own efforts for its safety. 'Your Lordship will observe,' he adds, 'that his sentiments have been uniformly hostile to its prosperity. He scrupled not yesterday to say that Russia was playing the game of this country, and repeated that it must ever be the interest of Prussia to prevent Poland from rising into a great and independent State.' He denied that Prussia was bound to anything more 'than to maintain Poland in the state in which she was before the Revolution,' but added that 'the most solemn assurances had been advanced here and to the Prussian minister at St. Petersburg that nothing further was meant by the Empress

than to re-establish everything on the same footing as it stood prior to May 3, 1791.'[1]

When the Russians crossed the Polish frontier, the Poles at once appealed to Prussia, and the English minister strongly supported their petition. Eden describes at length the conference between the Polish envoy, Count Potocki, and Schulenburg. The former appealed to 'the article of their treaty which expressly stipulated the assistance to be given, should any Power, under any pretence whatever, interfere in the internal arrangements of the Republic.' Schulenburg denied that the *casus fœderis* had arisen, for the change in the Polish constitution, which had been effected subsequent to the signature of the treaty, and without the privity of the King of Prussia, had essentially changed the political connection of the two countries. 'Count Potocki here observed that if his Prussian Majesty's approbation of the revolution subsequent to its taking place, were alone wanting to justify the claims of his country to his Majesty's protection, he was willing to rest it on that ground, and immediately produced the copy of the despatch dated May 19 of the same year, from his Prussian Majesty himself to Baron Goltz, Chargé d'Affaires at Warsaw. . . . In this despatch his Prussian Majesty extols the revolution as likely to strengthen the alliance between the two countries, approves of the choice made of the Elector of Saxony, and expressly enjoins Baron Goltz to communicate his sentiments to his Polish Majesty. To this paper the Prussian minister could oppose nothing except several censures of the indiscretion of having given a copy of it to the Polish Government. Count Potocki observed very properly,

[1] Eden to Grenville, May 29, 1792.

that that appeared to him to be immaterial, since a mere verbal assurance by his Prussian Majesty would have been equally obligatory.'[1]

Eden a few days later sent to England 'a copy of one of the notes presented by the Prussian minister at Warsaw, exhorting the Poles to meliorate their constitution; a copy of the second and sixth articles of their treaty with Prussia, and also a copy of a despatch written May 16, 1791, by his Prussian Majesty to Count Goltz, his Chargé d'Affaires at Warsaw, expressing his full and entire approbation of the revolution effectuated on May 3, 1791.' He noticed, however, that on all sides the Poles encountered systematic coldness. Hertzberg said that they deserved their fate, because they would not cede Dantzig and Thorn to Prussia. Potocki, though a man of the first position, was not invited to dine with the King, while an obscure Russian subject obtained this honour, and the Prussian ministers refused an invitation to the house of Potocki. General Mollendorf expressed frankly to Eden his opinion of the ruinous folly of a war with France, which left Russia 'sole arbiter of the fate of Poland.' 'He, however, said,' writes Eden, 'what every Prussian, without any exception of party, will say—that this country can never acquiesce in the establishment of a good government in Poland, since in a very short time it would rise to a very decided superiority.' The pretence, however, was still kept up that the question at issue was not a question of the integrity and independence, but only of the constitution of Poland. 'The Prussian minister repeated that the Empress's views did not extend beyond the total overthrow of the new constitution.' But Eden added significantly, 'I continue of opinion that if proposals for a new partition be made, plausible reasons

[1] Eden to Grenville, June 12, 1792.

will be found to remove the scruples of his Prussian Majesty.'[1]

For a short time, Eden himself doubted what policy would be pursued. It was possible, he thought, that Russia might prefer to establish a Russian ascendency in Poland, since the more violent measure of a partition would strengthen Austria and Prussia as well as herself. 'Hopes may be entertained that this act of violence will not be proposed. It would, as I have more than once observed, be readily adopted here, and be approved even by those who in general censure the measures of the Government, Poland having ever been looked upon as fair prey, and the only source of aggrandisement to this country.'[2]

It was sufficiently evident that one of these two fates was almost inevitably impending over Poland. From the young Emperor nothing was to be hoped. 'I am not without suspicion,' Keith wrote early in May, 'that Austria already knows that Prussia will set up no direct opposition to the Empress's views, and . . . that a co-partnership of the three Powers may renew the former scenes of depredation, and consummate the ruin of the miserable kingdom of Poland.'[3] A week later a new Russian ambassador brought to Vienna the manifesto of the Empress of Russia against the new Polish Constitution; 'I am well informed,' wrote Keith, 'that Austria is dismayed, and at bottom prepared to act a subservient part in that tragedy which Russia no longer hesitates to bring on the stage. I fear that a similar conduct may be expected on the side of Prussia, but not without the purpose of seizing her long-coveted and valuable portion of the plunder. However, Austria has not, to my know-

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[1] Eden to Grenville, June 5, 16, July 7, 10, 17, 1792.

[2] Ibid. July 14, 1792.

[3] Keith to Grenville, May 12, 1792.

ledge, concerted any project of dismemberment; but her principles are not of so rigid a stamp as to hinder her coming in (sneakingly) at the hour of partition for such a share of the garment as may suit her views.'[1]

Information which was not at this time before the English ministers enables us to fill up the picture. Prussia, in entering upon the French war, had from the very beginning asserted her determination to obtain a territorial indemnity,[2] and shortly after the death of Leopold, Schulenburg had sounded the Austrian minister about the possibility of this indemnity consisting of the Polish province of Posen. At the very time when the Prussian statesmen were assuring Eden that there was no question of any violation either of the integrity of Poland or of the pledges of Prussia, she was busily intriguing with Austria and Russia about the plunder of Polish territory. Before Catherine ordered her troops to enter Poland she had been assured from Berlin that she had no opposition to fear from Prussia, provided that country received her share of the spoil,[3] and at the same time Schulenburg endeavoured to negotiate a treaty by which Austria was to obtain her old wish of exchanging the Austrian Netherlands for Bavaria, while Prussia was to obtain the coveted territory in Poland. At Vienna, however, it was desired that Anspach and Baireuth should, in that case, pass to the Emperor, and on this question the negotiations were broken off.[4] The French war accordingly began without anything being settled. The two Sovereigns anticipated an easy conquest of Alsace, perhaps of something more, and the question of final indemnities might therefore be deferred.

The invasion, however, proved a total failure. The allied army was rolled back, and it became evident that

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[1] Keith to Grenville, May 19, 1792.
[2] Ibid. i. 452, 453.
[3] Sybel, ii. 143, 144.
[4] Ibid. i. 473–477.

if Prussia obtained an indemnity it was not likely to be from France. Great preparations were making for a new campaign, but it was soon rumoured that a part at least of the forces that were raised was not intended to act against France. It was not, however, till a few days after Grenville had written his despatch of November 13, that these rumours acquired consistency. On the 20th, Eden sent to England a despatch which must have been peculiarly unwelcome at a time when the probability of a Prussian alliance against France was being painfully forced on the minds of the English ministers. He began by mentioning the fears he had before expressed that, 'notwithstanding the different solemn guarantees of its present territory,' the new armament which Prussia was organising was intended not for the Rhine but for Poland. 'I was contradicted,' he continued, 'in this opinion by the assertions of General Mollendorf and Count de Schulenburg to the Dutch minister, who both so solemnly and strenuously renounced it that I was induced to state it merely as a report.' He has now learnt that the report was perfectly true. The Prussians were to enter Poland ostensibly for the relief of the Russians who were to march against France. General Mollendorf now confesses as much, and that he is himself to command, though he still persists that he had expected to have been sent to the Rhine. 'However iniquitous,' continues Eden, 'the measure may be in itself, and however daring at this awful moment, I will venture to repeat that a new partition will have the general approbation of this country. The unquiet state of Poland . . . will, of course, be alleged as an excuse.' [1]

The English ministers had from the beginning strongly discouraged the plots against Poland, and

[1] Eden to Grenville, Nov. 20, 1792.

Eden, in a conference with Schulenburg and another Prussian statesman, begged leave 'formally and ministerially to inquire the real destination of the present armament.' 'I scrupled not,' he says, 'to tell them my suspicions. . . . They both most solemnly protested that no order relative to those troops had been sent to the Cabinet; that that to the War Office directed their march to the Rhine, and that if they had any other destination it was unknown to them.' Eden insisted that the new armament was to be sent to Poland, and expressed his most earnest hope that if it were not too late, this order might even now be cancelled, 'as a measure which furnishes such strong grounds of apprehension for the fate of Poland would naturally alarm his Majesty's ministers, might in its consequences accelerate the general dissolution which at present threatens all governments on the continent of Europe, and would certainly increase the popular cry of animosity against monarchy.' 'To be mistaken on the present occasion,' he continued, 'would give me infinite pleasure, but both the Dutch minister and myself possess such unquestionable proofs of the fact as force my assent to it, however unwilling I may be to believe the Prussian ministers guilty of so gross a prevarication.' [1]

The term 'prevarication' was delicately chosen. Schulenburg, as we have seen, had borne a leading part in the plot, and there can be no doubt that he was perfectly aware of what was intended. Two or three days later the English ambassador was informed by the Prussian ministers that, as the King had made no communication to his Cabinet about the destination of his armament, they could not 'ministerially authorise him' to contradict the reported invasion of Poland,[2] and a letter of Eden written on the first day of 1793

[1] Eden to Grenville, Nov. 23, 1792.
[2] Ibid. Nov. 27, 1792.

tells the sequel of the story. General Mollendorf, he says, is on the eve of starting at the head of his army for the Polish frontier. 'This business is no longer a mystery here, and it is publicly said that the four Bailiwicks of which he is to take possession in Great Poland were the promised price of his Prussian Majesty's interference in the affairs of France, and that he has now exacted the discharge of the promise, with threats of otherwise making a separate peace with France. Russia, it is added, consents with reluctance, induced principally by fear of the Turks. . . . Having more than once represented to the Prussian ministers the extreme injustice of this measure and even its impolicy at this awful crisis, and having been answered only by miserable elusions, it appears unnecessary to say anything further on the subject.'[1]

Few things could have been more embarrassing to the English Government than these proceedings. The conduct of the French had brought them to the very brink of war. They were in daily expectation of hearing that a French army had crossed the Dutch frontier, and everything appeared to announce a struggle of the most formidable character. If it took place it was inevitable that England should be closely leagued with those continental Powers from whose French policy she had hitherto held steadily aloof. It was now discovered that these Powers were at this very time engaged in a scheme of plunder at least as nefarious as any that could be attributed to the French democracy. Poland lay almost wholly beyond the sphere of English interests and influence, and England could probably under no circumstances have prevented the partition; but it was peculiarly unfortunate that she should be obliged to

[1] Eden to Grenville, Jan. 1, 1793. Mollendorf crossed the Polish frontier on the 14th. Sybel, ii. 175.

begin her great struggle, by entering into a close alliance with the spoliators. A true statesman must have clearly seen that the contest which was impending was one in which moral influences must bear an unusual prominence. To the wild democratic enthusiasms, to the millennial dreams of a regenerated world which France could evoke, it was necessary to oppose the most powerful counteracting moral principles of the old world—the love of country and creed; the attachments that gather round property and traditions and institutions; the instinct of reverence; the sense of honour, justice, and duty. But what moral dignity, what enthusiasm, what real popularity could attach to a coalition in which the three plunderers of Poland occupied a prominent place? If, indeed, the picture of the morals of democracy which is furnished by the accumulated horrors of the French Revolution should ever induce men to think too favourably of the morals of despotism, the story of the partition of Poland is well fitted to correct the error.

The Polish machinations explain the tardiness of the German Powers in responding to the English overtures of November 13. The time at last came when a full explanation had to be made, and Lord Grenville himself may relate what occurred. On January 12 Count Stadion and Baron Jacobi, the Imperial and Prussian representatives, came to him and delivered in writing a vague and formal reply to the English note. Having done this, continues Lord Grenville, they 'informed me that they had a further communication to make, but that they had agreed to do it verbally only, and in such a manner that my reply to it (if I made any) might not form part of the official answer to be given to their written communications. They then explained that they had received information from their respective Courts that, with a view to indemnifying them for the

expenses of the war, a project had been brought forward by which Prussia was to obtain an arrondissement on the side of Poland, and in return was to withdraw any opposition to the exchange formerly proposed of the Low Countries and Bavaria. . . . I told them that I was glad they had mentioned this project in the form they had chosen, that I was much better satisfied not to be obliged to enter into any formal or official discussion on the subject of Poland, but that I thought it due to the open communication which I wished to see established between our respective Courts not to omit saying at once and distinctly that the King would never be a party to any concert or plan, one part of which was the gaining a compensation for the expenses of the war from a neutral and unoffending nation; that the King was bound by no engagement of any sort with Poland, but that neither would his Majesty's sentiments suffer him to participate in measures directed to such an object, nor could he hope for the concurrence and support of his people in such a system.' If France persisted in a war of mere aggrandisement, her opponents might justly expect some compensation; but 'this compensation, however arranged, could be looked for only from conquests made upon France, not from the invasion of the territory of another country.' [1]

Such a protest was useful in defining the position of the English Government, but it could have no influence on the course of events. Eden immediately after wrote, stating the King of Prussia's determination to act no longer as a principal in the war if the indemnification in Poland were refused him. Eden asked the Prussian minister 'if Russia had preferred any claims. He said, as yet nothing had been settled, but that Russia also had views of aggrandisement on the

[1] Grenville to Eden, Jan. 12, 1793.

side of Poland. Austria too must look there for indemnification, since it is not likely that the projected exchange can be carried into execution.'[1]

We must now return to the negotiations that were still carried on between England and France. Before the end of November the proceedings of the French both at Paris and in Belgium had made war almost inevitable, and Chauvelin, who believed that England was on the verge of revolution, who was in constant communication with disaffected Englishmen, and who had for some time interpreted the pacific language and conduct of Pitt as a sign of timidity, was the last man to avert it. His first object was to force on an immediate recognition of the Republic, and he is stated on good authority to have openly declared that his dearest wish, if he were not recognised at St. James's, was to leave the country with a declaration of war.[2] On November 29, he had an interview with Grenville in which he held language of the haughtiest kind. He told him that the triumphant march of Dumouriez upon Brussels had wholly changed the situation, and that the language a French minister might have held ten days before was inapplicable now. He evidently believed that he was the master of the situation, and that the English ministers would soon be at his feet. They were quite ready, he told Lebrun, to recognise the French Republic, and the nearer the war drew, the more anxious they were to find pretexts for avoiding it, if France would give them such.[3]

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[1] Eden to Grenville, Jan. 19, 1793.

[2] Miles, *Authentic Correspondence with Lebrun*, p. 84.

[3] Chauvelin to Lebrun, Nov. 29, 1792. Chauvelin gives a curious account of how, on entering Grenville's room, he found a small chair apparently intended for him to sit on. 'J'ai dérangé cette chaise qui m'a paru une petite déchéance in-

Grenville had indeed assured Chauvelin that 'outward forms would be no hindrance to his Britannic Majesty, whenever the question related to explanations which might be satisfactory and advantageous to both parties,' and Pitt declared that 'it was his desire to avoid a war and to receive a proof of the same sentiments from the French ministry.'[1] It is abundantly evident, however, from Lebrun's confidential correspondence with Chauvelin that there was no real prospect of England obtaining on any point the satisfaction she desired. France, he wrote, intended to examine the treaties forbidding the opening of the Scheldt according to 'natural principles,' and not according to the rules of ancient diplomacy. The clauses in the Treaty of Utrecht relating to it were null because they were contrary to justice and reason.[2] On the subject of the hostile intentions of France towards Holland, towards the House of Orange, and towards that constitution which England had guaranteed, Chauvelin was directed for the present to avoid a categorical explanation. The military situation was not yet such as to justify it. If, however, conversation arose on the subject, he was instructed to say that France would never interfere with the incontestable right of every country to give itself what government it pleased, but if any other Power, on the ground of 'a pretended internal guarantee,' attempted to prevent the Dutch from exercising this right of changing their government, the 'generosity of the French Republic would at once call her to their

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tentionnelle, et me suis emparé d'un grand fauteuil. Ce mouvement très marqué a frappé Lord Grenville, qui m'a dit avec embarras: "Vous n'avez pas voulu être plus près du feu. Il fait pourtant grand froid aujourd'hui."'

[1] Marsh's *History of the Politics of Great Britain and France*, ii. 12, 13.

[2] Lebrun to Chauvelin, Nov. 30, 1792 (French Foreign Office).

assistance.' Such a guarantee, he was to add, as that signed by England and Prussia was a plain violation of the rights of nations; it was radically null, and any attempt to enforce it would immediately produce a French intervention.[1] At the very time when Chauvelin was instructed to assure Grenville that France had no hostile intentions towards Holland, he was informed by Maret that Dumouriez intended to attack Maestricht;[2] and although the intention was soon abandoned, it was evident that if the French party in Holland succeeded in making an insurrection, the army on the frontier would assist them.

The complaints of the political propagandism of the French and of their meddling with the internal constitutions of other countries were abundantly justified. Not only the Paris Jacobins, but also the representative of the French Republic in England, corresponded actively with the disaffected clubs, and French agents were already intriguing with United Irishmen in order to produce an insurrection in Ireland.

It is somewhat difficult to ascertain the real intentions of Lebrun. They probably fluctuated according to the violence of that Parisian public opinion which he was bound on pain of death most absolutely to obey; according to the sentiments of his colleagues in the Executive Council, and also according to his belief in the imminence of a revolution in England, and in the supposed timidity of the English Government. The many different agents at this time employed by the French Government pursued different lines of action, and, while some were actively fomenting revolution, an attempt was made at negotiation in the beginning of December, which gave real promise of peace.

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[1] Lebrun to Chauvelin, Dec. 5, 1792.

[2] Chauvelin to Lebrun, Nov. 14, 1792.

Maret, who was afterwards better known as the Duke of Bassano, and who had lately been employed with Dumouriez in Belgium, was sent over to England in November 1792.[1] He came ostensibly about some private affairs of the Duke of Orleans, but he was in reality a political agent, in the confidence of Lebrun, and acting in close combination with Noel. He obtained an introduction to William Smith, a philanthropic member of Parliament who was closely connected with Wilberforce in the movement against the slave trade, and who was also an ardent advocate of peace, and he entered into discussion with Smith on the differences between the two countries. Smith was not a supporter of the Government; but he was on friendly terms with Pitt, and he was so much struck with the moderation of Maret that he appears to have exerted himself to bring Pitt and Maret together. A meeting, however, had been already arranged by an agent named Miles, and it took place on December 2. Maret found Pitt extremely courteous, and came away strongly impressed with his desire for peace. He believed it to be stronger and more genuine than that of the leaders of the Opposition, but he was also of opinion that the King and the majority of the ministers now leaned to war. Pitt declared himself absolutely and irrevocably decided not to suffer any aggression upon Holland, and to execute rigorously the treaties of England with her allies. The conversation passed to the decree of November 19, and Maret maintained that, notwithstanding the general expressions employed in it, it was intended only to apply to countries with which France was actually at war. Pitt answered that 'if an interpretation of that kind were possible, its effects would be excellent,' and

[1] On the mission of Maret see the valuable work of Baron Ernouf, *Maret, Duc de Bassano.*

Maret added that the decree had been carried by a surprise and that the Executive Council did not really approve of it. On the subject of the navigation of the Scheldt, Maret avoided discussion, and Pitt, seeing his desire, did not press him. Speaking of the fate of the French royal family, he expressed some hope that the majority of voters would not be in favour of death, but he said that the state of feeling in France was now such that any foreign interference would defeat its own end, as completely as the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick had done. He touched also on a recognition of the Republic. Pitt told him that this was not at present possible; he showed himself very unfavourable to Chauvelin, but declared that if the French would send a confidential secret agent who could be trusted, he would be cordially welcomed. Pitt dwelt earnestly on his anxiety to avoid a war, which must be disastrous to both countries, and on the great danger of the present state of things, which inflamed suspicions and distrust on both sides, and he finally suggested that Maret should send to Paris asking for instructions and powers. He begged him very earnestly to do so without delay, as every day was precious.[1]

Maret did as he was asked. It was his evident impression that, provided the security of Holland were

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[1] The account of this interview as published by the French Government will be found in a collection of *State Papers relating to the War against France* (London, 1794), i. 220–223, and a much fuller account in Ernouf. For the part played by Smith see Noel to Lebrun, Oct. 29, Nov. 22; Maret to Lebrun, Nov. 29, Dec. 2. Maret believed the interview of Dec. 2 to be mainly due to Smith, but Canon Miles has shown that Miles had arranged an interview before Maret came to England, and that he took a leading part in the negotiation. See Miles to Lebrun, Dec. 14, 18, 21; Noel to Lebrun, Dec. 13, 1792 (F.F.O.), and also Miles's *Correspondence*, which has recently been published by his son, Canon Miles.

fully established, and the decree of November 19 explained in the sense which he had indicated, every other point of difference might be arranged, and that the recognition of the Republic was only deferred. Chauvelin, however, complained bitterly of the confidence that had been given to Maret as a slur upon himself. He wrote to the Executive Council asking to be recalled, if another agent was employed, and he assured them that the English ministers were undoubtedly hostile, but that he was seeking in other quarters more worthy allies. Lebrun would probably have given Maret the powers he asked for, and have negotiated on friendly terms with Pitt, but the majority of the Executive Council preferred a less conciliatory course. On December 9 the French ministers wrote declining the proposal for a secret negotiation, and directing that all communications with the English Government must be made through Chauvelin, 'the known and avowed representative of the Republic.' On the 14th, Maret was obliged to communicate this decision to Pitt, and he almost immediately after left England.[1]

The hopes of peace had now almost gone, and the decree of December 15 greatly increased the imminence of the danger. It was now evident that, in spite of their previous assurances, the French Government had fully resolved to incorporate the Belgic provinces, to break up the whole structure of their ancient society, to destroy all their national institutions in order to assimilate them absolutely and without delay to the new French democracy. The decree opening the Scheldt already implied that the French considered themselves the sovereigns of these provinces, but the course they were now pursuing placed their intention beyond reasonable doubt. It was an intention which no

[1] Ernouf, pp. 98–104.

minister, who had not wholly abandoned the traditions of English policy, could regard without the gravest alarm.

It was plain that English public opinion now measured the magnitude of the danger, and was rapidly preparing for the struggle. Chauvelin wrote, indeed, that Fox and Sheridan were fully resolved to oppose the war; that Fox's speech on the subject on December 13 was so noble, that the French Convention would have at once ordered it to be printed; that he himself was indefatigable in urging 'the Friends of Liberty' to come forward; that he had established relations with some rich merchants in the City, and that 'under his auspices' numerous addresses to the Convention repudiating the idea of war were being signed in England. But the illusion that the nation was with him was now fast ebbing away. The militia were called out, and public opinion evidently supported the measure. The Government, he wrote, is determined to adopt a system of violence and rigour. 'The infamous Burke' has been consulted by the Privy Council. The English people are evidently not ripe for revolution. Their apathy and blindness to French principles is deplorable. They have so changed within a month that they are scarcely recognisable. In that time, 'merely through fear of convulsions dangerous to property, they have passed from admiration of us to hatred, and from the enthusiasm of liberty to the delirium of servitude.' The infinitesimal minority that followed Fox in Parliament reflected but too truly his weakness in the country. In the theatres the National Anthem was enthusiastically sung, and deputations of merchants to assure the Government of their support were hastening to the Treasury. Pitt, said Chauvelin, 'seems to have killed public opinion in England,' but he added in another letter these memorable words, 'The King of England

and all his council, with the exception of Pitt, do not cease to desire this war.'[1]

Fox avowed in Parliament his belief that the course he was pursuing would be ruinous to his popularity, but still Chauvelin deplored the weakness and the timidity of the Opposition. On December 7, Sheridan, on the part of Fox and of his friends, had a long interview with Chauvelin, and used some language which was very remarkable. He expressed great indignation at the decree of December 19, offering French assistance to all revolted subjects. Nothing, he truly said, in the language of this decree, restricted it even to cases where a clear majority of a nation were in insurrection, and it seemed to pledge the French to support by an invasion the rebellion of a few thousand men in Ireland. The Opposition, Sheridan said, desired a thorough but constitutional reform, and they desired peace with France, unless she made an aggression on Holland. They would strenuously oppose war on account of the opening of the Scheldt, and if it was declared on that ground they would represent it as a device for turning aside all reform. They would, perhaps, even go so far as to propose the impeachment of Pitt; but they warned the French envoy, that, in common with nine-tenths of the people of the three kingdoms, they would support the ministers in repelling any attempt of the French Government to intermeddle with English internal affairs. England had given France the example of a Revolution; she was quite capable of following the example of France in her own manner and with her own forces.[2]

On the side of Holland, the prospect at this time

[1] Chauvelin to Lebrun, Dec. 3, 7, 8, 14, 18, 1792.

[2] Ibid. Dec. 7, 1792. See, too, Ernouf, *Maret, Duc de Bassano*, pp. 100, 101. Fox used very similar language in Parliament. See Rose's *Diary*, i. 144.

had slightly improved. A French army entered Prussian Guelderland and encamped on the border of the Dutch territory, but the advance of the Prussians produced a change of plan. Fearing to be shut up between the floods of the Meuse and the Prussians, the French repassed the Meuse without penetrating to Cleves, and returned to Ruremonde, taking with them hostages for large sums of money to be raised in the lately occupied territory. From this fact as well as from some other indications, Auckland inferred that the project of an invasion of Holland was, for the present, laid aside, and the number of desertions from the French, and the difficulties they found in obtaining subsistence, made him hope that the worst was over. At the same time, he wrote, 'these provinces have every reason to continue vigilant, and to pursue their preparations with the utmost energy. Quarters are preparing near Anvers for 17,000 French troops, and the Légion Batave is to be cantoned at this side of Anvers, probably for the purpose of correspondence with the patriots and to draw recruits out of the Republic. . . . The internal tranquillity is, for the present, complete, but it is certain that there are many ill-disposed individuals in the principal towns.' 'I cannot doubt that it is the intention and plan of the French leaders to commence hostilities against this Republic on the first practicable occasion.' The Prince of Orange urgently asked for English vessels, stating that he had certain knowledge of a French plan to attack Holland on three sides—by Nimeguen, by Breda, and by Friesland.[1]

In Paris, the most violent and most reckless section of the Jacobins had now completely triumphed. The trial of the King had begun, and it was openly represented as the first act of a tragedy, which was only to

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Dec. 25, 26, 1792.

end with the destruction of monarchy in Europe. 'The impulse is given to the whole world,' said Grégoire in the Assembly. 'The nations are throwing themselves in the path of liberty. The volcano is about to break forth, which will transform the globe.'[1] Passions were raised to fever-heat, and the car of the Revolution flew on with a maddening speed, crushing every obstacle in its path. In the exultation and arrogance of the moment, temporising was hardly possible. The English Government, it was said, was arming. The English Court hated the Revolution. The English privileged orders were denouncing the September massacres. But behind them there was an English nation only waiting the signal for deliverance, and the peaceful language of Pitt to Maret was interpreted in Paris as a sign of fear.

On December 24, one of the more pacific members of the Convention called attention to the great uneasiness which had been excited in England by the decree of November 19, offering French assistance to all subjects revolting against their tyrants; and in order to dispel that uneasiness he moved the addition of a clause restricting the decree to countries with which France was actually at war, but the motion was at once rejected without discussion.[2] Appeals to the English people against the English Government became habitual in the tribune; the language of Lebrun took a tone of unmistakable menace,[3] and on December 27, Chauvelin as 'Minister Plenipotentiary of France,' and in obedience to the instructions of the Executive Council of the French Republic, presented to Lord Grenville a long and peremptory note charging the British ministry with having shown in their public conduct a manifest

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[1] Sybel, ii. 64.

[2] Marsh's *History of Politics*, 340, 341.

[3] Ibid. pp. 333–338; Bourgoing, deuxième partie, i. 315, 316.

ill-will towards France, and demanding in writing a speedy and definite reply to the question whether France was to consider England a neutral or a hostile country. The note proceeded to examine the grievances alleged in England against France. The decree of November 19 was not meant to favour insurrections or disturb any neutral or friendly Power. It applied only to nations which had already acquired their liberty by conquest, and demanded the fraternity and assistance of France, by the solemn and unequivocal expression of the general will. The French minister was authorised to declare that France would not attack Holland so long as that Power preserved an exact neutrality. The opening of the Scheldt was irrevocably decided 'by reason and justice.' If the English Government made use of it as a cause for war, it would be only 'the vainest of all pretences to colour an unjust aggression long ago determined upon.' It would be a war 'of the Administration alone against the French Republic,' and France would appeal to the English nation against its Government.[1]

The note was couched in a haughty and imperious strain, manifestly intended either to provoke or to intimidate. Grenville clearly saw that it was meant to accelerate a rupture.[2] The opening of the Scheldt was the violation of a distinct treaty based on grounds which would justify the abrogation of any treaty, and it acquired a peculiar danger from the great maritime power and preparations of France, and from the attitude which France was assuming both towards Belgium and towards Holland; while the active correspondence of French agents with the disaffected, both in Great Britain, in Ireland, and in Holland; the public recep-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 250–253.
[2] Grenville to Auckland, Dec. 28, 1792

tion and encouragement by the Convention of Englishmen who were avowedly seeking to overturn the Constitution of their country; the emphatic refusal of the Convention to exempt England from the terms of the decree of November 19, and the intercepted letters of Tainville and De Maulde, deprived the more pacific portions of the note of all credit. Just at this time the Russian ambassador came to Grenville and proposed a concert with his Court on the subject of French affairs. Grenville expressed the willingness of the King to enter into such a concert, 'confining it to the object of opposing a barrier to the danger that threatens the tranquillity of all other countries and the political interests of Europe from the intrigues and ambitious views pursued by France, without directing his views to any interference in the interior government of that country.' Much doubt, Grenville explained to Auckland, was felt by the King's ministers about the real motives of the Empress, but it seemed to them that a qualified acceptance of the proposal was the best means of ascertaining them. 'If either the original intention, or the effect of this step on our part, induced the Empress to take an active share in the war which seems so little likely to be avoided, a great advantage will be derived from it to the common cause. If she withdraws the sort of overture she has made, no inconvenience can result from the measure taken by the King, at all to be put in comparison with the benefit of success.' It was probable, Grenville thought, that before any answer could arrive from St. Petersburg the matter would have come to a crisis.[1]

[1] Grenville to Auckland, Dec. 28, 29, 1792. See, too, the account of this transaction sent by Grenville to the English ambassador at St. Petersburg. Count Woronzow urged as a reason for again making a proposal of concert which had previously been rejected, that the Empress felt that the question was no longer what

On the 31st, Grenville sent his answer to Chauvelin. He began by reminding him that he had never been recognised in England in any other public character than as accredited by the French King, and that, since August 10, his Majesty had suspended all official intercourse with France. Chauvelin was therefore peremptorily informed that he could not be admitted to treat with the King's ministers in the character he had assumed. Since, however, he had entered, though in a form which was neither regular nor official, into explanations of some of the circumstances that had caused strong uneasiness in England, the English ministers would not refuse to state their views concerning them. The first was the decree of November 19. In this decree England 'saw the formal declaration of a design to extend universally the new principles of government adopted in France, and to encourage disorder and revolt in all countries, even in those which are neutral. . . . The application of these principles to the King's dominions has been shown unequivocally by the public reception given to the promoters of sedition in this country, and by the speeches made to them precisely at the time of this decree and since on several different occasions.'

should be the interior government of France, but whether 'that Power should be permitted to extend its conquests over all the countries in its neighbourhood, carrying with it principles subversive to all government and established order; that the views of aggrandisement entertained by France were sufficiently manifest from what had happened both in Savoy and in the Netherlands, and that the means which she employed for that purpose were more dangerous to the tranquillity and security of other Powers even than the success of her arms.' Grenville observed to Whitworth that there was a great distinction between 'an interference for the purpose of establishing any form of government in France, and a concert between other Governments to provide for their own security at a time when their political interests are endangered both by the intrigues of France in the interior of other countries and her views of conquest and aggrandisement.' Grenville to Whitworth, Dec. 29, 1792.

The ministers would have gladly accepted any satisfactory explanation of this decree, but they could find neither satisfaction nor security 'in the terms of an explanation which still declares to the promoters of sedition in every country what are the cases in which they may count beforehand on the support and succour of France, and which reserves to that country the right of mixing herself in our internal affairs whenever she shall judge it proper, and on principles incompatible with the political institutions of all the countries of Europe.' Such a declaration was plainly calculated to encourage disorder and revolt in every country; it was directly opposed to the respect which is due to all independent nations; and it was in glaring contrast to the conduct of the King of England, who had scrupulously abstained from all interference in the internal affairs of France.

The assurance that France had no intention of attacking Holland as long as that Power observed an exact neutrality, was drawn up, the note observed, in nearly the same terms as that which was given last June.[1] But since that assurance, a French captain had violated both the territory and neutrality of Holland by sailing up the Scheldt in defiance of the prohibition of the Dutch Government, to attack the citadel of Antwerp, and the French Convention had ventured to 'annul the rights of the Republic, exercised within the limits of its own territory and enjoyed by virtue of the same treaties by which her independence is secured.' Nay, more, Chauvelin, in this very letter of explanation, emphatically asserted the right of the Convention to throw open the navigation of the Scheldt. France could have no right to annul the stipulations relating to that river unless she had also a right to set aside all treaties. She

[1] On the terms of this declaration see Marsh, ii. 71.

could have 'no pretence to interfere in the question of opening the Scheldt unless she were the sovereign of the Low Countries or had the right to dictate laws to all Europe.' To such pretensions the reply of the English Government was lofty and unequivocal. 'England never will consent that France should arrogate the power of annulling, at her pleasure, and under the pretence of a pretended natural right, of which she makes herself the only judge, the political system of Europe, established by solemn treaties and guaranteed by the consent of all the Powers. This Government, adhering to the maxims which it has followed for more than a century, will also never see with indifference that France shall make herself either directly or indirectly sovereign of the Low Countries, or general arbitress of the rights and liberties of Europe. If France is really desirous of maintaining friendship and peace with England, she must show herself disposed to renounce her views of aggression and aggrandisement, and to confine herself within her own territory without insulting other Governments, without disturbing their tranquillity, without violating their rights.' 'His Majesty has always been desirous of peace. He desires it still,' but it must be a peace 'consistent with the interests and dignity of his own dominions, and with the general security of Europe.'[1]

The hand of Pitt may be plainly traced in this memorable document. It proved decisively to France and to Europe that it was vain to attempt to intimidate his Government, and the part which related to the Austrian Netherlands cleared up a point which had hitherto been somewhat ambiguous. It is curious to compare the grave and measured terms of the note of Grenville with another ministerial utterance, which was

[1] *Parl. Hist.* XXX. 253–256.

penned on the very same day. On December 31, Monge, the French Minister for the Navy, sent a circular letter to the seaport towns of France containing the following passage: 'The King [of England] and his Parliament wish to make war with us. But will the English Republicans suffer it? Those free men already show their discontent and their abhorrence of bearing arms against their French brethren. We shall fly to their assistance. We shall make a descent on that isle; we shall hurl thither 50,000 caps of liberty; we shall plant the sacred tree and stretch out our arms to our brother republicans. The tyranny of their Government will soon be destroyed.'[1]

It was plain that the breach was very near. The French were levying enormous contributions in the towns of Brabant, imprisoning burgomasters who were not in accordance with their views, plundering the churches and monasteries, reorganising all branches of the administration with an impetuous haste, endeavouring by every means to flatter and secure the populace, while they crushed the clergy and the rich. They encountered, however, in many quarters considerable resistance. In Ostend especially, there was a fierce riot, and great crowds paraded the streets demanding the old Belgic constitution and the restoration of the priests. The Batavian Legion of disaffected Dutchmen in the French service now numbered at least three thousand men, and they issued a violent manifesto in French and Dutch, which was industriously disseminated by the 'patriots' in Holland.[2]

The Dutch Government was acting in perfect harmony with that of England, but Auckland regarded the prospect with a despondency which the event too fully

[1] Marsh, i. 341–344.

[2] See several letters of information inclosed by Auckland to Grenville, Jan. 1793, also *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, liv. vii.

justified. The objects of Governments are not only various, but in some measure incompatible, and the Dutch constitution, like the old constitution of Poland, being mainly constructed with the object of opposing obstacles to the encroachments of the central power, had left the country wholly incapable of prompt and energetic action in times of public danger. No augmentation of the military or naval forces, no serious measure of defence, could be effected without the separate assent of all the provinces, and the forms that were required by law were so numerous and so cumbrous that it was probably chiefly its more favourable geographical position that saved the United Provinces from the fate of Poland. It was intended to add 14,000 men to the Dutch army, and there was a question of subsidising foreign troops, but in the meantime the Dutch army, though 'well trained, well appointed, and in general well disposed,' was far below the necessities of the time, utterly unpractised in war, and scattered in seventeen or eighteen feeble garrisons.

Nor was the spirit of the people what it had been. The Stadholder and the ministers were most anxious to do their best; but Auckland warned his Government that Holland would make little efficient exertion unless there was a great pressure of danger. 'Nor,' he said, 'in the estimate of that danger will she be guided by any long-sighted views. It must be a danger apparent to all eyes and palpable at the moment. This arises partly from the mixture of the mercantile spirit with political deliberations, but principally from the constitution of the provinces which call themselves a Union, with every defect that can contribute on questions of general moment to contrariety of decision and to procrastination of execution.'[1]

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Jan. 2, 11, 1793.

A French loyalist named De Curt, who had been a member of the first National Assembly and who had afterwards served as an emigrant under the French Princes, had about this time some remarkable confidential conversations with Lord Hawkesbury. De Curt was a native of Guadaloupe, and he held a mission from its Assembly. He seems to have been a man of high character and liberal views, sincerely attached to the House of Bourbon, and so disgusted with the course events had taken in France that he was anxious to be naturalised as an Englishman. The French West Indian Islands he represented as vehemently loyalist. The Assemblies of Guadaloupe and Martinique had driven from those islands all persons suspected of democratic principles, as well as notorious bad characters who might be made use of in revolution, and these men had chiefly taken shelter in the British island of Dominica, where, if they were suffered to remain, they were likely to become a source of much trouble. He stated that the French West Indian Islands would never submit voluntarily to the Republican Government; but that their successful resistance depended largely on the chances of assistance from England.

Lord Hawkesbury said that he could only speak to him unofficially and as a private individual, but in this capacity he spoke with great freedom. 'I told him,' he says, 'that we certainly wished to continue at peace with France . . . but that many events had lately happened which afforded great probability that Great Britain and Holland would be forced to take a part in the war; that the moment of decision, however, was not yet arrived,' and that the ministers were anxiously awaiting the development of the French policy about Holland. De Curt was strongly of opinion that the French ministers, even if they wished it, would not dare to recede, and he declared his deter-

mination to send at once a messenger to Guadaloupe to advise the colony to resist. Hawkesbury begged that it should be clearly understood that such a course was not taken in consequence of any engagement with England. De Curt replied that he would advise it on his own responsibility 'as the most prudent which they could pursue for their own interests in the present state of affairs between France on the one hand and Great Britain and Holland on the other. He then told me,' continues Hawkesbury, 'that his connections were solely with Guadaloupe, but that Martinique would certainly pursue the same line of conduct, that the inhabitants of Martinique had also an agent here, whom he named, with whom he would consult, who would give, he was sure, the people of Martinique the same advice. . . . He added that the agent of St. Lucia would necessarily follow the fate of Martinique, and that in the end St. Domingo would adopt the same conduct.'

Guadaloupe in his opinion could, without assistance, resist for at least two months any force the Convention could send against it, and if England and Holland engaged in the war, the French would have no port except the Danish island of Ste. Croix to resort to. 'In his opinion the war must be ended in one campaign, from the ruin of French commerce, the destruction of the French fleets, and the surrender of the French islands to Great Britain.' He said with much emotion that the authority of the House of Bourbon was at an end; that the anarchy in France was likely to last for at least thirty years, and that it was his wish and his duty to follow the fate of his real country, the West Indian Islands. In a subsequent interview he described a plan for the invasion of England from Cherbourg by boats made of copper or tin, which had been proposed by an engineer named Gautier to the Maritime Committee of the National Assembly at a time when De Curt was a member of that

body, and which had been approved of in case a rupture should take place. A letter nearly at the same time came from the Marquis de Bouillé representing that Martinique and Guadaloupe were in revolt against the Convention, and imploring that England would assist them, if possible openly, if not clandestinely.[1]

On January 7 Chauvelin sent a new note to Grenville, again asserting his character of minister plenipotentiary of the French Republic, and complaining in very angry terms of the Alien Act as an infraction of that portion of the Treaty of Commerce which secured to the subjects and inhabitants of each of the two countries full liberty of dwelling in the dominions of the other, travelling through them when they please and coming and going freely 'without licence or passport, general or special.' He described the Treaty of Commerce as a treaty to which England owed a great part of her actual prosperity, but which was 'burdensome to France,' and had been 'wrested by address and ability from the unskilfulness and from the corruption of the agents of a Government' which France had destroyed. He now demanded from Lord Grenville a 'speedy, clear, and categorical answer' to his question whether the French were included under the general denomination of 'foreigners' in the Bill. Grenville simply returned the note with a statement that Chauvelin had assumed a diplomatic character which was inadmissible. In another letter Chauvelin protested against the proclamation prohibiting the export of grain and flour from England.[2]

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[1] Minutes of a conference between Lord Hawkesbury and M. de Curt, Dec. 5, 18. Note of the Marquis de Bouillé, Dec. 30, 1792 (French Correspondence at the Record Office).

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 256–262. On the 11th Chauvelin announced that the French considered the Treaty of Commerce annulled on account of its infraction by the English.

The complaint relating to the Alien Act might be easily answered. The restriction imposed on foreigners travelling in England was a matter of internal police rendered necessary by a great and pressing danger; the measure included a special clause in favour of those who could 'prove that they came to England for affairs of commerce,' and it is a curious fact that the French themselves only seven months before had imposed still more severe restrictions upon foreigners in France. Neither the English nor any other ambassador had complained of the decree of May 1792, under which no foreigner was suffered to travel in France on pain of arrest without a passport describing accurately his person or his route.[1]

A much more important document was a note drawn up by Lebrun, and presented by Chauvelin on January 13. It is an elaborate answer to the letter of Lord Grenville which has been already quoted, and it was drawn up in moderate, plausible, and dignified language very unlike some of the late correspondence. Grenville in communicating it to Auckland said that it was evident from it that the tone of the Executive Council was much lowered; though it was impossible to say whether the present rulers of France would comply with the demands which alone could insure permanent tranquillity to England and Holland.[2] Lebrun began by emphatically declaring the sincere desire of the Executive Council and of the French nation to maintain friendly relations with England, and the importance of having a competent and accredited representative to explain the differences between the two countries. In order that this should be accomplished the Executive Council of the French

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[1] See Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 277–285; Sybel. *Hist. de l'Europe*, ii. 101.

[2] Grenville to Auckland, Jan. 13, 1793.

Republic sent formal letters of credence to Chauvelin, which would enable him to treat with all the severity of diplomatic forms. He then proceeded to explain that the decree of November 19 was not intended, as the English minister alleged, to encourage the seditious, for it could have no application except in the single case in which the general will of a nation, clearly and unequivocally expressed, should call the French nation to its assistance and fraternity. In the opinion of the Executive Council, the decree might perhaps have been dispensed with, but with the interpretation now given to it, it ought not to excite uneasiness in any nation.

On the subject of Holland the French minister said Grenville had raised no definite point except the opening of the Scheldt. This measure, he contended, was of no consequence to England, of very little consequence to Holland, but of vital importance to Belgium, and especially to the prosperity of Antwerp. It was in order to restore to the Belgians the enjoyment of a precious right, and not in order to offend any other Power, that France had thrown open the navigation. The restriction closing it had been made without the participation of the inhabitants of these provinces. The Emperor, in order to secure his despotic power over them, had without scruple sacrificed their most inviolable rights. France in a legitimate war had expelled the Austrians from the Low Countries, called back its people to freedom, and invited them to re-enter into all the rights which the House of Austria had taken away from them. 'If the rights of nature and those of nations are consulted, not France alone but all the nations of Europe are authorised to do it.'

A passage follows which if it could have been fully believed might have done much to appease the quarrel. 'The French Republic does not intend to erect itself into a universal arbitrator of the treaties which bind

nations. She will know how to respect other Governments, as she will take care to make her own respected. She has renounced, and again renounces, every conquest; and her occupation of the Low Countries will only continue during the war, and the time which may be necessary to the Belgians to insure and consolidate their liberty; after which let them be independent and happy. France will find her recompense in their felicity.'

If England and Holland continue to attach any importance to the navigation of the Scheldt, they may negotiate on the subject directly with Belgium. 'If the Belgians through any motive consent to deprive themselves of the navigation of the Scheldt, France will not oppose it. She will know how to respect their independence even in their errors.'

'After so frank a declaration, which manifests such a sincere desire of peace, his Britannic Majesty's ministers ought not to have any doubts with regard to the intentions of France. If her explanations appear insufficient, and if we are still obliged to hear a haughty language; if hostile preparations are continued in the English ports, after having exhausted every means to preserve peace we will prepare for war with a sense of the justice of our cause, and of our efforts to avoid this extremity. We will fight the English, whom we esteem, with regret, but we will fight them without fear.'[1]

A few words of comment must be added to this skilful note. It will be observed that the French still reserved their right of interfering for the assistance of insurgent nations under circumstances of which they themselves were to be the judge; that they still maintained their right to annul without the consent of the

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 262–266.

contracting parties the ancient treaties regulating the navigation of the Scheldt, and that, while repudiating all views of incorporating the Low Countries in France, they announced their intention of occupying those provinces, not merely during the war, but for an undefined period after the war had ended. It will be observed, too, that moderate and courteous as it was in form, the note of Lebrun was of the nature of an ultimatum, threatening war if its explanations were not accepted as satisfactory, and if the military preparations of England continued. The question, however, which is most important in the controversy between the two nations, is the sincerity of the French repudiation of views of conquest. Was it true that the annexation of Belgium and the invasion of Holland had been abandoned?

In order to judge these points, the reader must bear in mind the whole train of events which have been narrated in this chapter. The English case was essentially a cumulative one, depending on many indications of French policy no one of which might perhaps alone have been decisive, but which when taken together produced an absolute certainty in the minds of the ministers that the French were determined to incorporate the Belgic provinces; that they were meditating a speedy invasion of the Dutch Republic, and that if an insurrection broke out in that Republic it would be immediately supported by French arms. Everything that has since become known of the secret intentions of the French Government appears to me to corroborate this view. At the very time when the correspondence that has been cited was continuing, urgent orders were sent to the French Commissioners to press on the measures assimilating the Belgic provinces to France in accordance with the decree of December 15, while the Executive Council received a memoir from some of the Dutch

'patriots' pointing out the defenceless condition of Zealand and inviting an immediate invasion of Holland. The project for invasion, which had for a time been laid aside, was revived; it was being carefully discussed at Paris at the precise period when the note of Lebrun was drawn up, and on January 10 it appeared to have been fully decided on, though on further reflection the enterprise was for the moment deferred.[1] Well-informed English agents reported that the Executive Council were looking forward to an insurrection in Ireland and afterwards in England which would paralyse the English Government while the French troops poured into Holland.[2] The violence of language of prominent members of the Convention against all kings and monarchies, and against the Government of Great Britain in particular, exceeded all bounds,[3] and on January 12, Brissot, in the name of the Diplomatic Committee, presented a long report to the Convention on the attitude of the British Government towards France. It foreshadowed war in every line. As usual, it professed much sympathy for the British nation, but it accused their Government, in a strain of violent invective, of having not only brought wholly frivolous charges against the French Republic, but of having also acted towards that Republic with systematic malevolence and insult. It urged the French Government to demand the repeal of the Alien Act, the removal of all restrictions on the export of provisions from England to France, and an immediate explanation of the armaments of England. War with England, it argued, would be a matter of

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[1] Sybel, ii. 102, 103. Compare Marsh's *Hist. of Politics*, i. 353–364.

[2] See a letter of Miles, Jan. 18; Marsh, i. 366.

[3] It is impossible within my present limits to do justice to this part of the case, but the reader will find many specimens of the language used at this time in the Convention in Marsh, ch. xiv.

little danger, for the English were already overwhelmed by their debt and taxation; Ireland was ripe for revolt, and India would almost certainly be severed from the British rule.[1]

The day after this extraordinary report was presented, the Convention ordered fifty-two ships of the line and thirty-two frigates to be immediately armed, and twenty-four new vessels to be constructed.[2] Grenville, on the other hand, in two peremptory and haughty notes, dated January 18 and 20, pronounced the French explanations wholly unsatisfactory, declared, in reply to the threat of Lebrun, that England would persist in those measures which her Government deemed essential for her security and for that of her allies, and refused either to receive the letters of credence of Chauvelin, to recognise in him any other position than that of an ordinary foreigner, or to exempt him from the provisions of the Alien Act.[3]

The attitude of Chauvelin was so hostile, and his connection with disaffected Englishmen so notorious, that the English Government would hold no confidential communication with him; but through the instrumentality of Miles, some correspondence was still kept up with Maret, who had now become Chef de Département at the Foreign Office under Lebrun, and even with Lebrun himself. In a very earnest though very amicable letter, dated January 11, Miles had warned Maret that, unless the French Convention could be induced to recede from its present policy, war was absolutely inevitable. Could it be doubted, he urged, that the order given to the French generals to pursue the enemy into neutral territory was a violation of the independence of Powers

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[1] *Moniteur*, Jan. 15, 1793.
[2] Bourgoing, deuxième partie, i. 318, 319.
[3] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 266–269.

that were not at war with France; that the decree opening the Scheldt was a violation of treaties which England had solemnly bound herself in 1788 to defend; that the incorporation of Savoy in the French Republic was in flagrant opposition to the French professions that they desired no conquests; that the decrees of November 19 and of December 15 were drawn up in such general terms that they were an invitation to all nations to revolt against their Governments, and a promise that France would assist every rebellion; that the reception by the National Assembly of English subjects who were openly conspiring against their Government was a gross insult, and a clear proof that England must consider herself comprised among the nations to whom French 'fraternity' was offered? If the Executive Council would retrace its steps on these points, war would not break out. Otherwise neither the interests nor the honour of England would permit her to acquiesce.[1]

All the English diplomatic correspondence of this time shows not only the extreme gravity but also the extreme difficulty of the situation. It was on January 12 that the Imperial and Prussian representatives announced to Grenville the approaching partition of Poland and the project of the exchange of the Austrian Netherlands for Bavaria, and thus introduced a new and most formidable element of complication and division. Grenville at once communicated to Auckland the interview which had taken place, and the total disappro-

[1] *Authentic Correspondence*, pp. 106–108. This letter is also printed by Marsh, ii. 143–145. On the 7th, Maret had written a long letter to Miles complaining of the hostile attitude and language of the English ministers, and especially of the tone of Grenville's despatch of Dec. 31. A great part of it is given by Ernouf, pp. 113, 114. I do not quote it, as the arguments are much the same as those used by Lebrun.

bation which he had expressed in the name of the King's Government of the intended partition. 'It is impossible,' he continued, 'to foresee what the effect may be of his Majesty's determined resolution not to make himself a party to any concert of measures tending to this object.' On the proposed exchange of the Austrian Netherlands, however, he hesitated. 'I thought it advantageous,' he wrote, 'not to conceal from either of the ministers that I felt there were many circumstances in the present moment which might make such a project less objectionable in the eyes of the maritime Powers than it had hitherto been. His Majesty's servants are, however, extremely desirous of knowing the general ideas entertained by the Dutch ministers on a point in which the interests of the Republic are so immediately and materially concerned.' For the present every encouragement should be given for a reconciliation of the Austrian Netherlands to their former rulers. 'I am inclined to believe nothing would be so advantageous to our interests as the re-establishment of the sovereignty of the House of Austria there, on the footing of the ancient constitution, if that could be made the consequence of the French withdrawing their troops, according to the plan proposed from hence.'[1]

English and Dutch intelligence fully concurred about the imminence of an attack on Holland. On the 18th, Auckland reported that revolutionary papers were industriously scattered among the Dutch soldiers, and that Hope, the great banker at Amsterdam, who had excellent means of information, had warned him that an invasion of Holland was certainly resolved on ; and the letter of Auckland crossed a letter of Grenville stating that he had received from Paris private and trustworthy information that the French had determined that their

[1] Grenville to Auckland, Jan. 13, 1793.

next campaign should be chiefly against Holland.[1] Auckland wrote that intelligence had arrived that 70,000 Austrians were ordered to march for the Low Countries. It was most important that they should come quickly. In the meantime, he said, he would do all he could to induce Holland to make the best of the short interval of peace. 'By the nature of the Dutch Constitution, under which the discretionary power given to the provinces and their representatives is extremely narrow in all deliberations tending to war, it will be impossible for their High Mightinesses to give me that explicit answer which it is my duty to require, without a previous reference to the provinces.' 'There is, in this country,' he added, 'a considerable party disposed to subvert the Government;' another party 'inclined to keep clear of French intervention, but solicitous to impede the measures of this Government;' a third party, 'perhaps the most numerous,' who from self-interest, short-sightedness, and 'attachment to commercial habits,' wish at any cost to keep neutral. Others, with the best intentions, 'sink under a sense of their own weak state, so ill prepared to withstand the first inevitable shock.' Under such circumstances it was idle to expect much enthusiasm, cordiality, or promptitude, but Auckland believed that the announcement that an English land force might be expected, would be well fitted to encourage the Dutch.[2]

It would be a mistake to suppose that all who were in authority in France really desired war with England. Many sagacious men—and Lebrun was probably among the number—perceived the extreme danger of such a war, and dreaded the spirit that was prevailing; but the

[1] Auckland to Grenville, Jan. 18. Grenville to Auckland, Jan. 22, 1793.

[2] Auckland to Grenville, Jan. 23, 1793.

frenzy that was abroad blinded most men to difficulties; others knew that the guillotine lay beyond the most transient unpopularity, and believed that violent counsels were most likely to be popular,[1] and others, again, had speculated largely in the public funds, and desired a war through the most sordid personal motives.[2] Maret, who was now assisting Lebrun at the Foreign Office, still hoped that a war between England and France might be averted, and he dictated instructions to Chauvelin strongly urging patience and moderation.[3] Talleyrand and Benoit, a secret agent employed in London, assured the French Government that the dispositions of Pitt were such that war with England could be avoided without difficulty if France desired it, provided the

[1] Thus Gouverneur Morris, who observed events in Paris very closely, was convinced in December that it would be impossible for England to avoid war (*Works*, ii. 262). He describes how the French politicians 'affect to wish Britain would declare against them, and actually menace the Government with an appeal to the nation' (ib. 263), but, he added, 'in spite of that blustering they will do much to avoid a war with Great Britain *if the people will let them*. But the truth is that the populace of Paris influence in a great degree the public councils' (ib. 265). See, too, a letter of Captain Monro, Jan. 7, 1793. I may mention here that Chauvelin wrote to Lebrun, Jan. 7, that it was reported that Morris was in correspondence with the English minister and informed him of all that passed in Paris. Lebrun answered (Jan. 15) that he was confirmed in his suspicions of the ill-will and perfidy of Morris. 'Il travaille sourdement à nous nuire, et à donner connaissance au Gouvernement anglais de ce qui se passe chez nous.' I have not found any confirmation of this statement.

[2] Maret, in a conversation with Lord Malmesbury in 1797, gave a curious account of the cause of the failure of his mission to England in 1792 and 1793. He said that Mr. Pitt had received him very well, that the failure of the negotiation should be attributed to the then French Government, who were bent on war, and that the great and decisive cause of the war was, 'quelques vingtaines d'individus marquans et en place, qui avaient joué à la baisse dans les fonds, et là ils avaient porté la nation à nous déclarer la guerre. Ainsi,' said he, 'nous devons tous nos malheurs à un principe d'agiotage.'—*Malmesbury Diaries*, iii. 502, 503.

[3] Ernouf, pp. 116, 117.

negotiations were placed in more conciliatory hands than those of Chauvelin; and similar language was held by De Maulde, who had come to Paris to complain of his removal from the Dutch Embassy, and who was able to attest the pacific sentiments both of Auckland and of the Dutch Pensionary, Van de Spiegel.[1] But the most important influence in favour of peace was now Dumouriez.

This general, who seemed at one time likely to play in the history of the French Revolution the part of Monk, if not the part of Napoleon, had long been feared and distrusted by the Jacobins. A grave division of opinion had broken out at the end of November, when Dumouriez wished to attack Holland by taking Maestricht, which he considered essential for the defence of Liège and of the Meuse, and when the Executive Council refused his request and resolved for the present to respect the neutrality of Holland. To the imprisonment, the trial, the execution of the King, Dumouriez was violently opposed, and he has declared in his Memoirs that France was at this time in reality governed by fifty miscreants equally cruel and absurd, supported by two or three thousand satellites drawn from the dregs of the provinces and steeped in every crime.[2] The Decree of December 15, and the measures that followed it, filled him with indignation. He had himself published, with the sanction of the Convention, a proclamation assuring the Belgians that the French came to them only as friends and brothers; that they had no intention of meddling with their internal affairs, and that they left them at perfect liberty to frame their own Constitution. But the Convention had now proclaimed every nation which

[1] Compare Dumouriez, *Mémoires*, iii. 383, 384. Ernouf, pp. 110–113, 121.

[2] *Mémoires*, iii. 281.

refused to throw off its old aristocratic institutions the enemy of France, and had sent down a troop of despotic French Commissioners, whose government was one continued scene of pillage, confiscations, proscriptions, and barefaced attempts to force the people to declare themselves French subjects. Like the Girondins, Dumouriez desired an independent but friendly Belgium, and he complained that the French were rapidly turning the population of these provinces into implacable enemies.[1] He refused to take any part in executing the Decree of the Convention, but when he remonstrated against it he was told very frankly that France had to wage a great war and to support an army of six hundred thousand men; that the plunder of Belgium was essential to the task, and that in the opinion of the ministers a total disorganisation of all neighbouring States was the most favourable condition for the spread of the Revolution.[2] This policy was deliberately pursued in the destruction of all the institutions and constituted authorities of the Belgic provinces. Dumouriez endeavoured to prevent it, by hastening the convocation of the Primary Assemblies, and thus giving the inhabitants some voice in the management of their own affairs, but the Commissioners at once interposed and prevented this step.[3] They viewed his authority with constant jealousy; they interfered even with his military administration; and the Jacobin papers in Paris denounced him as a traitor, sold to the interests of the Duke of Orleans, or aspiring to a dictatorship or to an independent sovereignty as Duke of Brabant.[4]

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[1] *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, iii. 277, 278, 296.

[2] Ibid. pp. 339, 340, 361. The reader will observe how perfectly this opinion of the French ministers justified the predictions of Burke.

[3] Ibid. pp. 302, 303.

[4] Ibid. pp. 285, 294, 295.

The military situation also appeared to him extremely alarming. He had advocated an attack on Holland, partly because he believed it to be a rich and easy prey, and partly because he regarded the possession of Maestricht and Venlo as a matter of vital strategical importance. But he had been forbidden to attack Maestricht, and his army was rapidly sinking into ruin. The whole organisation for the administration of the army, as it had existed in Paris under the monarchy, had been shattered by the Revolution. Almost all the old, experienced and competent administrators had been driven away to make room for men whose chief claim was the prominent part they had taken in the events of August 10 and in the September massacres, and the result was that the conquerors of Jemmapes, the men who had in a few weeks subdued the whole of the Belgic provinces, found themselves in a state of utter destitution. About 15,000 men had deserted. An equal number were in the hospitals. Six thousand horses of the artillery died at Tongres and at Liège for want of forage. During the months of December and January the troops at Liège were only half clothed. There was such a want of shoes, that thousands of soldiers were wearing wisps of straw tied round their feet. Their pay was long in arrear. Numbers were dying from want of food. Guns, saddles, equipments of every kind were deficient. The little discipline which had formerly existed had completely given way, and when Dumouriez attempted to restore it by the establishment of capital punishment for insubordination, the Commissioners interposed their veto. If under these circumstances the Austrians had advanced in force there seemed little chance of resistance, and Dumouriez feared that the Belgians, exasperated almost to madness by the oppressions of the Commissioners,

would rise behind him, and cut off all possibility of retreat.[1]

Happily for the French, they had to deal in Flanders with most fatuous and incapable enemies. The Austrians, having dismantled the barrier forts and alienated the inhabitants by their constitutional innovations, had left these provinces so inadequately garrisoned, that at Jemmapes they had been overwhelmed by a French army which was nearly, if not quite, the double of their own;[2] and now, when the tide of popular feeling had turned, and when the invading army seemed almost reduced to impotence, they did nothing, still clinging to the antiquated military tradition that no important expedition should be undertaken in the winter.[3] Dumouriez therefore found it possible to quit his post. On the plea of ill health, and under the threat of resignation if he was refused, he obtained leave of absence, and hastened to Paris, where he arrived on January 1. He hoped to

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[1] *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, iii. 247, 287–292, 338, 380. Dumouriez's strong statement of the hatred with which the inhabitants of the Austrian Netherlands now regarded the French, and of the probability that they would rise against them if a foreign army appeared within their borders, is fully corroborated by Morris, *Works*, ii. 255, 269, 276.

[2] On the enormous preponderance of the French at Jemmapes see the facts collected by Bourgoing, *Hist. Diplomatique de l'Europe pendant la Révolution*, 2me partie, tome i. 257.

[3] Frederick the Great had already shaken this notion, which the French Revolutionists and Napoleon destroyed. A similar change passed over naval warfare in the eighteenth century. Thus Walpole wrote in Jan. 1760: 'Our army was under arms for fourteen hours on the 23rd, expecting the French, and several of the men were frozen when they should have dismounted. What milksops the Marlboroughs and Turennes, the Blakes and Van Tromps appear now, who whipped into winter quarters and into port the moment their noses looked blue. Sir Cloudesley Shovel said that an admiral would deserve to be broke who kept great ships out after the end of September, and to be shot if after October. There is Hawke in the bay weathering this winter, after conquering in a storm.'—Walpole to Montagu,

obtain a revocation of the Decree of December 15, to organise measures for providing his army with necessaries, to acquire the direction of the war, and, if possible, to prevent the execution of the King. He found some strong supporters in the ministry, but on the whole he had little success, and several weeks passed in weary and unprofitable wrangling. The execution of the King on January 21 filled him with unfeigned horror, but a new scene of ambition was now suddenly opened to him. He emphatically maintained that even at this late period, if France desired it, it was not only possible, but easy, for her to continue at peace with both England and Holland,[1] and the reports of Benoit from England and of De Maulde from Holland pointed to him as the negotiator who was most likely to be acceptable to Pitt.[2] There was a proposal to send him to London, and he accepted it with eagerness, but after a long discussion in the Council it was rejected by three to two. Lebrun, however, and Garat, who formed the minority, without the knowledge of the other ministers arranged with Dumouriez that he should return to Holland, and undertake a negotiation with England through the medium of Lord Auckland. It was at the same time decided that Maret should return to England to negotiate with Pitt.[3]

It was on January 28, when the execution of the King was already known, and when war was looked upon in Holland as certain and imminent, that Auckland received in the middle of the night a secret and unexpected visit from De Maulde. He said that Dumouriez had returned to Ghent to take command of the army, and that he wished for a conference with Auckland in order to try to arrange a peace. Auckland

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[1] *Mémoires*, iii. 364, 379. [2] Ibid. pp. 383–385.
[3] Ibid. pp. 385–387.

answered that, though he had once expressed a readiness for such a conference, everything was changed by the horrid murder of the King; that he had no wish to see anyone representing the murderers; that even if Dumouriez wished to make peace he could not control the anarchy in Paris. A repudiation of the decrees authorising the opening of the Scheldt in defiance of the Treaty of Münster and claiming to interfere with the internal affairs of other countries, and the withdrawal of the French troops within their own borders, were the only terms England could now accept; and these were terms to which it was hopeless to expect the French Convention to consent.

The reception was not promising, but De Maulde earnestly persisted, and his language opened out strange vistas of possibility to the English minister. Dumouriez, he said, was most anxious to meet Auckland, and he would do so even within the Dutch frontier. Time was pressing, for if no arrangements were made, the invasion of Holland must at once take place; but it was a complete mistake to suppose that it was impossible to come to an arrangement. The Executive Council were most anxious to avoid war with England, and Dumouriez himself was by no means inclined to act the part of a mere agent. Auckland spoke of him as the representative of the murderers of the King. In truth he looked upon that tragedy with unmixed detestation, and if he had consented to resume the command of the French army after it had been accomplished, this was simply because he was nowhere safe except at the head of his troops. The danger of any man who had any name had now become extreme. 'Paris was in the possession of 20,000 or 30,000 desperate ruffians from the different departments, capable of every excess that human depravity can dictate and the most hardened cruelty execute.' 'He suggested,' Auckland continues, 'a

strange idea, that Dumouriez's great ambition is to negotiate matters into a practicable system of government, and when the whole is completed to be received as ambassador in England.' While the negotiation was in suspense De Maulde thought that hostilities would not begin, and if they did, it would be only in a very small and merely colourable way. Auckland promised at once to refer the matter for instructions to his Government, but he told him frankly that he could give him no hope of success. He gave money, however, in this interview both to De Maulde and to his secretary, Joubert, and he wrote home that he was 'inclined to gather' that Dumouriez himself might be gained. He asked Grenville if in that case he might offer him 20,000*l.* or 25,000*l.* and half as much to De Maulde.[1]

Next day De Maulde returned, bringing a letter from Dumouriez asking for an interview on the frontier, and in this conversation and in a third, which took place on the following day, he more fully developed his project. He assured Auckland that he would find Dumouriez's sentiments about the murder and the murderers of the King very like his own, and he suggested that the question of the Austrian Netherlands might be settled by giving those provinces to the Elector of Bavaria, and allowing Bavaria to pass to Austria. If the neutrality of the maritime Powers continued only a short time longer, this exchange, he thought, might without much difficulty be effected. The ultimate object of Dumouriez, if Auckland would assist him, was to make England the 'armed mediator' for restoring peace to Europe. Auckland naturally asked how far these plans were sanctioned by the

[1] Auckland wrote to Grenville no less than three letters on Jan. 28 (one official and the other two secret and confidential) describing this interview.

authorities in Paris. De Maulde answered that Dumouriez had told the Executive Council that he would seek an interview with Auckland; that he had received from them full powers and had shown them his letter to Auckland,[1] but that he had further views of which they were ignorant. His main object was to gain the full confidence of the army, and with its assistance to restore peace and prosperity under some form of government, and at the proper moment 'he would attempt it in a way which would astonish all mankind.'[2]

Auckland expressed himself to his Government overwhelmed by the responsibility which these strange interviews had thrown upon him, and quite unable to come to any decision about the sincerity or intentions of Dumouriez. His doubts must always be shared by historians, and it is now idle to conjecture what might have been the consequences to Europe if the projects foreshadowed by De Maulde had come to pass. Dumouriez, in his own brief account of the matter, has greatly exaggerated the alacrity with which Auckland received the overture, and it may, I think, be confidently added that he has greatly misrepresented his own intentions. He says that his object was to secure the neutrality of Holland and England at a time when the military situation was almost desperate, but that, having rendered this service to his country, he meant publicly to detach himself from the murderers of the King, and to retire as an emigrant to the Hague.[3] This account is not consistent with the letters of Auckland, and it is, to me at least, incredible that a man as ambitious and as clear-sighted as

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[1] According to the account given by Dumouriez in his *Mémoires*, this statement was not true. Lebrun and Garat alone were informed of the intentions of Dumouriez, and the affair was not brought before the Council. *Mémoires*, iii. 385.

[2] Auckland to Grenville, Jan. 29, 31, 1793.

[3] *Mémoires*, iii. 394, 395.

Dumouriez undoubtedly was, can have either wished to sacrifice the power which he obtained through his command of the army, or imagined that, if he did so, any treaty which he signed would be observed.

Before the interview between Dumouriez and Auckland could take place, another train of events had come to maturity, which made it useless or impossible. The execution of the King on January 21 had hurried on the inevitable catastrophe. Morris, in relating to Jefferson the circumstances of the tragedy, predicted with his usual sagacity some of its effects. 'I believe,' he said, 'that the English will be wound up to a pitch of enthusiastic horror against France which their cool and steady temper seems to be scarcely susceptible of.'[1] The ghastly scenes of the September murders; the almost daily accounts of fresh murders and outrages perpetrated by the present rulers of France; the torrent of insults poured upon the English Government by prominent French politicians; the circular letter of Monge; the report of Brissot; the reception of disaffected Englishmen by the Convention; the constant rumours of French intrigues in England and Ireland, had all contributed to raise the anti-Gallican sentiment to a point of horror and repulsion that it was not easy to restrain. The diplomatic negotiation between the two countries had already ceased. Lord Grenville had formally announced to Chauvelin that England would not permit the treaty relating to the navigation of the Scheldt to be annulled, and that if France desired peace with England she must abandon her conquests and confine herself within her territory. The French Government had, as formally, announced their determination of maintaining the opening of the Scheldt and of continuing their occupation of Belgium, and they had threatened to declare war if the hostile

[1] *Works*, ii. 276.

preparations of England continued. Grenville had rejoined that England would persist in the measures which she deemed necessary for her security, and he had positively refused to receive the credentials of Chauvelin, or to recognise him as possessing any other position than that which he had derived from the King of France.

Such was the situation when the news of the murder of Lewis XVI. arrived. Since the massacre of St. Bartholomew no event in a foreign country had produced such a thrill of horror in England. The representations in the theatres were countermanded. The Court mourning was adopted by the whole population. With the exception of a single Whig politician,[1] it was worn by every member of the House of Commons. At the corners of streets, in every public place, the details of the execution were placarded, hawked about, and eagerly discussed by indignant crowds, and when the King drove out, his carriage was surrounded by a mob crying, 'War with France!' The horror of the nation was expressed from countless pulpits, while the Sacrament was exposed on the Catholic altars. For a time scarcely a dissentient voice was heard, and Fox himself declared in an address to the electors of Westminster that there was not a person in Europe, out of France, who 'did not consider this sad catastrophe as a most revolting act of cruelty and injustice.'[2]

Pitt at once seized the opportunity. On January 24, when the torrent of emotion was at its height, Grenville wrote a letter to Chauvelin directing him within eight days to leave the country. 'The character,' he wrote, 'with which you have been invested at this Court, and the functions of which have been so long

[1] See Ashton's *Old Times*, p. 285.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1793, p. 229. On the impression produced in England, see some illustrations collected by Ernouf, p. 119.

suspended, being now entirely terminated by the fatal death of his late Most Christian Majesty, you have no more any public character here. The King can no longer, after such an event, permit your residence here.'

On the 28th the whole correspondence between the King's ministers and Chauvelin was laid before Parliament, with a royal message, in which the late event in Paris was designated as an 'atrocious act,' and an immediate augmentation of the military and naval forces was demanded. It was necessary, the message said, 'for maintaining the security and rights of the King's dominions, for supporting his allies, and for opposing views of aggrandisement and ambition on the part of France which would be at all times dangerous to the general interests of Europe, but are peculiarly so when connected with the propagation of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society.'[1]

Pitt had probably never represented more truly the prevailing sentiments of the English people than when he dismissed Chauvelin. His act was intended as a protest against what nearly all Englishmen regarded as the cruel and unprovoked murder of a friendly sovereign; and it must be remembered that Chauvelin had no acknowledged diplomatic character, that his unofficial negotiation had ended in an irreconcilable difference, and that he had, as an individual, given the gravest provocation to the Government. As it was truly said, no English minister who mixed in monarchical, as Chauvelin had done in republican intrigues, would have been tolerated in Paris for a week. Besides this, if, as Pitt believed, the war had become inevitable, it was a matter of high policy to enter into it supported by a strong wave of popular feeling. Nothing can be more

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxx. 238, 239, 269.

certain than that neither the murder of the King nor any other change in the internal government of France would have induced him to commence it; but when for other reasons it had become unavoidable, he naturally sought to carry with him the moral forces of indignation and enthusiasm which might contribute to its success. By refusing to hold any further communication with the representatives of the murderers in Paris, Pitt represented and satisfied those feelings, and he was certain of a genuine popular support if the French chose to make his action the occasion for war.

The question was, I think, essentially a question of policy. After all that had happened, Pitt had, it appears to me, a full right to dismiss Chauvelin, and the expediency of the measure depended mainly on conditions of public feeling which are best judged by contemporary opinion. Two evil results, however, undoubtedly followed this measure of the Government. It precipitated a war which, however, had become almost absolutely certain, and it alone gave some faint colour of plausibility to the charge of those who have endeavoured to represent the great French war as an unwarrantable attempt to interfere with the internal government of France.

The end was very near, but it had not yet come. Chauvelin might have stayed in England for eight days, but he chose to depart on the day following his dismissal. The next day a despatch arrived from Lebrun formally recalling him. It was written on January 22, and is said to have been drawn up by Maret.[1] Like everything which at this time fell from his pen, it was plausible, dignified, and conciliatory, and it was evidently intended to delay, if not to prevent, the rupture. As the English Government had declined to receive his

[1] See Ernouf, p. 119.

credentials, Chauvelin was directed at once to quit London, but he was to leave a letter for Lord Grenville, saying that, as his presence there could be of no further use, he was going to France to lay the case before the Executive Council. He was to add, however, that if the British Government, 'reverting to more seemly sentiments,' desired to be at harmony with France, the French ministers would do everything which was honourably in their power to re-establish good relations between the two countries. They wished for peace. They respected England as the oldest of free countries. They knew that even the most successful war with her would be a calamity to the world; but they were persuaded that if this crime against humanity were committed, impartial history would throw the whole blame on the English Government. The only definite point at issue on which the note touched was the Alien Act. It could not, the writer urged, be defended by the French regulations about passports, for those applied to all travellers, while the English law was directed against foreigners alone.

The importance of the despatch did not lie in its arguments. It lay in its conciliatory tone, and especially in the concluding announcement that Maret was about immediately to go to England as Chargé d'Affaires to take care of the papers at the French Legation. Chauvelin, before going, was to inform Lord Grenville of this fact.[1]

Had it been known a few days earlier, it might have had a great influence, but it was now too late. Chauvelin received the despatch while he was already on the road, and the contents were in consequence never communicated to the English ministers.

On the 28th, Reinhard, the secretary who had been

[1] Lebrun to Chauvelin, Jan. 22, 1793 (French Foreign Office).

left in charge of the French Legation, wrote describing the meeting of Parliament and the excitement and rumours that were abroad. 'It seems evident,' he said, 'that the British Cabinet has unanimously decided on war with France, that public opinion is wholly unfavourable to us, and that, even if there were less unanimity, we could not prudently separate the Government from the nation.' At the same time, he adds, the first excitement produced by the death of the King has abated. The dangers of the war are more clearly seen, and a pacific overture might have excellent effects. It would either prevent the war, and thus deprive France of half her enemies, or it would embarrass the ministry and break the present formidable unanimity in Parliament, or 'even if, as I believe, war is inevitable, what we now do will decide whether that war shall last three months or three years.'[1]

Maret arrived in London on the afternoon of the 30th. He had passed Chauvelin in the night without recognition, and it was not until his arrival that he learnt the details of what had taken place, and the non-delivery of the despatch which was intended to prepare the English ministers for his arrival. He at once announced his presence by letter to Lord Grenville, but he thought it advisable not to describe himself as Chargé d'Affaires, but simply as an agent entrusted with the archives at the French Legation. Such a character, he explained to his Government, opened the door to informal and confidential communications, whereas, if he at once assumed a diplomatic character, the English Government would be driven to the alternative of either formally accepting him or expelling him from the country. He did not see the ministers, but he saw Miles, and apparently some other persons

[1] Reinhard to Lebrun, Jan. 28, 1793.

who were behind the scenes, and he sent Lebrun a full and curious report on the state of affairs. Miles agreed with Reinhard that a certain reaction in favour of peace had shown itself among the middle classes, but the Prince of Wales was reported to have said that the mission of Maret was too late; that if God Almighty came over as an envoy He could not now prevent a war, and that it would break out before three weeks. The ministry had held a council late at night to consider the question whether the French envoy should be received. He was informed that the King's personal influence had been employed, through the intervention of Lord Hawkesbury, to induce the ministers to refuse to see him, as it had before been employed in favour of the dismissal of Chauvelin. But Pitt and Grenville urged the opposite policy, and a strong party on the ministerial side in Parliament insisted that while every preparation should be made for war, any reasonable proposal of the French ministry should still be listened to.

'The death of the King,' continued Maret, 'has produced the effect which we have foreseen. The hatred of the French name is now at its height. That portion of the nation which is not engaged in commerce and which does not possess property wishes for war. The mourning ordered by the Court is worn by every man who is able to procure for himself a black coat. This universal mourning obliges me to see no one, for I should be received nowhere, nor could I even leave the house without being exposed to the insults and ignorant ferocity of the portion of the nation which is still called here the populace.' He added, however, that the merchants of the City and also the country gentry wished for peace; that the news of his own arrival in London had caused the funds to rise three per cent.; that the party which desired parliamentary reform was still active, and that the ministry were divided.

Pitt sincerely desired peace. He knew that both his supremacy and his favourite schemes of policy depended on it, but, since the death of the King, Maret believed that the other ministers inclined to war. Chauvelin had made himself personally obnoxious, and his dismissal was due to the irresistible instinctive explosion of indignation that followed the execution of the King. Ministers, however, were surprised, and the warlike party gratified, by the precipitation with which he left the country, and those who wished for war were hoping that the French would declare it. If the French Government acted in accordance with this wish, there was no more to be said; if not, Lebrun was entreated to send immediate instructions whether he wished Dumouriez to be the negotiator or desired to entrust the task to Maret himself. 'Time is pressing. . . . To-day they are disposed to hear me, and it is not improbable that they would receive our illustrious general; but dispositions may change in a few days.' The newspapers, he added, had mentioned his arrival, and he noticed that it was the ministerial papers that spoke of it most favourably.[1]

Before this report could arrive at its destination the die was cast. On February 1, almost immediately after the arrival of Chauvelin in Paris, the Convention declared war against both the King of England and the Stadholder of Holland, and orders were sent to Dumouriez at once to invade Holland.

On February 4, before the news of the French declaration of war had reached London, Grenville wrote to Auckland that the ministers had been very seriously considering the proposal of Dumouriez for an interview.

[1] Ernouf, pp. 124-129. Dumouriez erroneously stated in his *Mémoires* that Maret had not been suffered to go to London, but had been turned back at Dover, and this statement has been often repeated.

Doubts of his sincerity, objections to treating with anyone who could be regarded as a representative of the regicides, and a profound disbelief in the possibility of anyone now answering for the future proceedings of France, weighed heavily on their minds; but nevertheless the King, wishing to omit no honourable means to peace, directed Auckland to see Dumouriez. He must tell him, however, that he could enter into no negotiation till the embargo which the French had just laid on all English ships in French ports was raised, and he must tell him also that in consequence of that embargo, and also of 'the inconvenience which arose from the speculations in our public funds occasioned by the equivocal situation and the conduct of M. Maret,' his Majesty has thought fit to order that person and his secretary to quit the kingdom, and will permit no other agent employed by the Executive Council to remain there. Auckland was instructed to hear the suggestions of Dumouriez, and to ask how he could carry them into effect, but he must state clearly that the Chauvelin correspondence contained the sole grounds on which England would negotiate, and that an abandonment of all French conquests and a withdrawal of the obnoxious decrees were necessary conditions of a peace. England was now connected with other Powers, and she must take care that no act of hers was injurious to their interests. She had not, however, broken her neutrality; she would not do so unless French acts left her no alternative; but from the recent tenor of French policy the English Government had no doubt of the aggressive designs of France, and it was partly because Holland was still so unprepared that the smallest delay was to her advantage, that they permitted this negotiation to take place.[1]

[1] Grenville to Auckland, Feb. 4, 1793.

It was evident that a negotiation undertaken in this spirit could have no result. For the past fortnight the English Government seemed to have given up all hopes of peace, and on neither side was there now any real disposition to make sacrifices for it. On the 7th Maret quitted London in obedience to the order of the King, and at Calais he met the messenger who was sent from Paris to recall him, and to communicate to him the declaration of war. Another messenger from Paris arrived in time to prevent the proposed interview between Dumouriez and Auckland.

To complete this long diplomatic history one more despatch must be quoted, which does much to elucidate the true sentiments of the English Government. It shows that it was their determination to form at once a close connection with Austria and Prussia against France, but that they had still great hopes of defining and limiting the war and of bringing about a speedy pacification of Europe. The letter I refer to was written to Eden, who was just moving from Berlin to Vienna, and was dated February 5, before the news of the French declaration of war had arrived in London. Eden was instructed to endeavour to establish a close connection with Austria on the affairs of France, and in order that there should be no jealousy or concealment he was to inform the Emperor of the overture of Dumouriez, and to add that while the King thought it best not wholly to reject it, he was fully resolved not to depart from any of the views or principles laid down in the correspondence with Chauvelin. 'The King,' Grenville said, 'desires to enter into a formal engagement with the Emperor and the King of Prussia on the principles which have always been opened to both those Powers. . . . Feeling the interests of his own dominions and the general security of Europe endangered by the conquests made by France in the course of the present

war, connected as they are with the propagation of the most destructive principles, he engages to consider no arrangement as satisfactory on the part of France which shall not include the abandonment of all her conquests, and the renunciation of all views of interference on her part in the interior of other countries, and of all measures of aggression or hostility against them; provided that the Emperor shall on his part engage that if France shall, within the space of two months from this time, agree to make peace upon the terms above stated, adding to them stipulations for the security of her Most Christian Majesty and of her family, the Emperor will on his part consent to such a peace; and lastly that if in consequence of the refusal of these terms by France the present war should be continued and his Majesty should take part in it, their Majesties engage not to make peace with France, except by mutual consent,' on any terms short of these. 'The proposal,' the despatch continues, 'of concluding peace with France in the present moment on the terms of the abandonment of her conquests and the renunciation of all hostile measures as above stated, may appear at first view to militate with the general ideas held out by the two Courts of Vienna and Berlin of being indemnified for the expenses of the last campaign. You will, however, observe that, with respect to the particular objects of indemnification stated by those Courts,[1] it is not inconsistent with either of them. Of that part of the plan which relates to Poland, I have already stated, both to M. Jacobi and M. Stadion, in the most unequivocal terms, the King's disapprobation of that project against which you have made such frequent though ineffectual representations. It is, however, of a nature entirely

[1] The partition of Poland and the exchange of the Austrian Netherlands for Bavaria.

unconnected with the settlement of the affairs of France, and though his Majesty never can consider it but with disapprobation and regret, he has no interest to oppose himself to its execution by any active measures on his part. The Austrian part of the plan appears in every point of view considerably less objectionable, though certainly attended with great difficulties. But the execution of such a plan, if it can at all be carried into effect, obviously depends on obliging the French to withdraw their forces from those provinces, and is so far not inconsistent with the proposal of a pacification on the terms above mentioned.'[1]

Similar overtures were at the same time made by the English Government to Russia. As early as December 29, indeed, Pitt had proposed to that Power that a joint representation should be made to France assuring her that if she would abandon her conquests, withdraw her troops within her own limits, rescind the acts which were injurious to the rights of other nations, and give pledges that she would for the future abstain from molesting her neighbours, all acts of hostility against her should cease, and no attempt would be made to interfere with her Government or Constitution. The French declaration of war interrupted these negotiations, and it was not until 1800 that the intended representation was disclosed. The language of Fox on this occasion is very remarkable. He expressed his complete approbation of the policy indicated in the despatch, but said that as its contents had never been communicated to the French it was mere idle verbiage. The obvious answer is that as far as England was concerned, the terms on which Grenville insisted were simply a reproduction of those which were formally announced to France in the correspondence with Chauvelin, and the

[1] Grenville to Eden, Feb. 5, 1793.

English Government had in fact lost no opportunity of declaring its firm intention not to interfere with the internal government of France.[1]

There are few pages of English history which have been more grossly and mischievously misrepresented than that which we are considering.[2] The account which I have given will, if I mistake not, fully establish that the war between England and France was of a wholly different kind from the war between France and the great German Powers which had broken out in the preceding year. France might, indeed, with no great difficulty, have avoided the German war; but she had undoubtedly received much real provocation, and provocation of a kind which no powerful monarchy would have endured. The German war was also, in a very great degree, an anti-Revolutionary war, undertaken in the interests of monarchy. This was the attitude which Burke from the beginning desired England to assume, but Pitt wholly rejected his policy. It is certain beyond all reasonable doubt that he sincerely and earnestly desired peace with France; that from the outbreak of the Revolution to the death of Lewis XVI. he abstained from any kind of interference with her internal concerns; that he never favoured directly or indirectly the attacks of Austria and Prussia upon her; that he again and again announced, in the most formal terms, the determination of England to remain neutral in the struggle, and especially to abstain from all interference

[1] See *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 1313, 1314, 1359; *Wilberforce's Life*, ii. 13; Russell's *Life of Fox*, ii. 301–303.

[2] I must acknowledge that, many years ago, misled by a most misleading pamphlet of Cobden and by the much higher authority of Buckle, I introduced into my *History of Rationalism* a sentence (which has been expunged in the later editions) blaming Pitt for the French war. It shows at least that I had no undue bias in favour of the conclusion to which a more careful investigation has led me.

with the internal affairs of France. All the schemes of policy to which he had especially attached his reputation and his ambition, depended for their success upon the continuance of peace, and there is overwhelming evidence that, until an advanced period in 1792, the English Government had no doubt that they could keep clear of the contest, and had made no adequate preparations for a war.

It is also, I conceive, certain beyond all reasonable doubt that the war of 1793 was forced upon England by gross and various provocations proceeding from the Revolutionary party in France. The decree of November 19 promising French assistance to any subjects who revolted against their rulers, the manner in which English disaffected citizens were received by the French Convention, the language of insult which was habitually employed by the most prominent politicians in France, and the public attitude and well-known intrigues of Chauvelin, constituted together an amount of provocation of the most serious kind. No continental nation which was strong enough to resent it would have endured such provocation. Most assuredly Revolutionary France would not have done so, and it is almost certain that if the father of Pitt had been at this time directing English affairs, these things alone would have produced a war. But these things alone would never have moved Pitt and Grenville from their policy of peace. The real governing motives of the war are to be found elsewhere. They are to be found in the formal and open violation by France of the treaty relating to the Scheldt, which England had guaranteed—a violation which was based upon grounds that would invalidate the whole public law of Europe, and attempted under circumstances that clearly showed that it was part of a scheme for annexing Belgium, conquering Holland, and perhaps threatening England with inva-

sion. They are to be found in the overwhelming evidence of the intention of the French to incorporate in their own republic those Belgic provinces whose independence of France was a matter of vital interest to the security of England; in the long train of circumstances which convinced the English ministers of the determination of Revolutionary France to invade Holland, and to overthrow that Dutch Government which England had distinctly bound herself by a recent treaty to defend.

These were the real grounds of the French war, and they were grounds by which, in my judgment, it may be amply justified. Several of the English wars of the eighteenth century were undertaken for reasons which were either unjust or doubtful or inadequate, but the war of 1793 is not among the number. Probably the only policy by which a collision with France could have been avoided would have been a policy, not of neutrality, but of active sympathy with the Revolution. But such a policy would have outraged the conscience of England, would have placed the ministry which adopted it in violent opposition to English public opinion, and would have added incalculably to the dangers that were threatening Europe. Nor is it in the least likely that in the scene of combustion, aggression, and general anarchy that was opening, England could even then have escaped a war, though she might have possibly fought with other enemies and in another cause.

Till within a fortnight of the declaration of war by France, the English Government does not appear to me to have taken any step that cannot easily be defended, but its conduct during that last short interval is more doubtful. Whether the expulsion of Chauvelin after the execution of the King was not precipitate and unwise, whether the language of Grenville in his later cor-

respondence with Chauvelin and Lebrun was not unduly haughty and unconciliatory, whether the overtures of Dumouriez might not have been more cordially received, are points which are open to serious doubt. In judging these things, however, it must be remembered that the provocations which produced and justified the war had come to their full maturity before the death of the King. The case was complete. The war, in the opinion of the English ministers, had become absolutely inevitable, and their object was therefore no longer to avert it, but rather to rouse and brace the energies of England for the struggle. In entering on a great war the management and guidance of popular passions and prejudices is one of the supreme arts of statesmanship, and it is by its effects on English public opinion that the somewhat haughty and unconciliatory attitude of the English Government in these last weeks must be mainly judged. There are some questions upon which the opinion of a later historian is always of more value than that of a contemporary statesman. He writes when the tangled skein has been unravelled, when the doubtful issues have been decided, when the wisdom of a policy has been judged by its results. But the course of conduct which is most adapted to the transient conditions of public feeling can never be so truly estimated as by a great statesman of the time. There is a period when attempts to delay an inevitable war are only construed as signs of weakness, timidity, and vacillation, and there is much reason to believe that a more conciliatory or procrastinating policy after the execution of the King would have had no result except to damp the ardour of the English people, and to alienate or discourage their allies.

It is certain, however, that the French war was entered upon by Pitt with extreme reluctance, and that not only the formal declaration of war, but also the real

provocation, came from Paris. The war was not in its origin either a war against revolution, or a war of conquest, though it speedily and by an inevitable process acquired something of both characters. When the struggle had once begun, the party which had been preaching a crusade against France as the centre of a contagious anarchy naturally acquired increased power and influence, which the horrors of the Reign of Terror, the growth of sedition in Great Britain and Ireland, and the triumphs of the Revolutionary armies, all contributed to strengthen. On the other hand, Pitt found himself indisputably superior to his enemies on sea. The financial schemes for which he specially cared had been interrupted, and it is not surprising that he should have come to adopt the policy of Dundas, and look to the conquest of the rich sugar islands of France as a chief end of the war. 'Indemnity for the past,' as well as 'security for the future,' became the avowed object of the English Government, and, while their military enterprises nearer home were marked by extreme debility and inefficiency, island after island was speedily conquered.[1]

To the magnitude and danger of the war Pitt was for a long period entirely blind. 'It will be a very short war,' he is reported to have said, 'and certainly ended in one or two campaigns.' 'No, sir,' Burke answered, when such language was addressed to him, 'it will be a long war and a dangerous war, but it must be undertaken.' That a bankrupt and disorganised Power like France could be a serious enemy, seemed to Pitt wholly incredible. The French were already, he was accustomed to say, 'in a gulf of bankruptcy, and he could almost calculate the time by which their resources

[1] See *Wilberforce's Life*, ii. 92, 391; Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, ii. 203, 204.

would be consumed.'[1] So convinced was he that the enterprise before him would be short and easy, that this great financier entirely abstained at the opening of the war from imposing any considerable war taxation, and at once added enormously in its very earliest stage to that national debt which he believed it to be his great mission to liquidate. A speedy peace, the rich colonies that were certain to be wrested from France, and the magical virtues of the Sinking Fund, would soon, he believed, restore the finances of England to their former prosperity. It was only very slowly and painfully that the conviction was forced upon him that England had entered on a mortal struggle, the most dangerous, the most doubtful, and the most costly she had ever waged.

In the history of Continental Europe, the nineteenth century may be truly said to begin with the French Revolution. In the history of England the great line of secular demarcation is to be found in the opening of the French war of 1793. From this time English parties and politics assumed a new complexion, and trains of causes came into action which only attained their maturity at a much later period. Pitt still retained for many years his ascendency, but the character of his ministry had wholly changed. All those schemes of parliamentary, financial, and commercial reform, which had occupied his mind in the earlier and brighter period of his ministry, were necessarily cast aside during the agonies of the struggle, but they were not simply adjourned till quieter times. The strong impulse towards wise and temperate reform which had prevailed among the political classes in England since the closing years of the American war was suddenly checked by the French Revolution, and a reaction set in which was

[1] *Wilberforce's Life*, ii. 10, 11, 92, 332.

the most formidable in English history and which continued with little abatement for about thirty years. In the meantime the immense increase of the national burdens, the sudden and enormous agglomeration of population in manufacturing towns, and the growing difficulties in Ireland, had brought to the surface problems which imperatively required the most enlightened and vigilant statesmanship. But the Tory party which had carried England triumphantly through the great French war proved wholly incompetent to deal with such problems. In the eyes of men like Percival and Eldon every privilege was sacred, every change was a step to revolution. Language was employed about the relation of subjects to their rulers scarcely less servile than that of the divines of the Restoration, and a sullen resistance to all reform, a besotted attachment to every abuse, became for many years the characteristics of that great party which still professed to follow in the footsteps of Pitt and to derive much of its philosophy from the writings of Burke.

The influence of the French Revolution on the Whig party was equally disastrous. The enthusiasm with which some of the leading members of that party regarded it, and their furious opposition to the measures that led to the outbreak of the war in 1793, as well as to its renewal in 1803, gave them an anti-national bias at least as strong as that which the Tory party had exhibited when it was most tainted by Jacobitism. In public and private, Fox conspicuously displayed it.[1]

[1] Grey once remonstrated with him on the indiscretion of some of his language in favour of France. Fox answered: 'The truth is, I am gone something further in hate to the English Government than perhaps you and the rest of your friends are, and certainly further than can with prudence be avowed. The triumph of the French Government over the English does in fact afford me a degree of pleasure which it is very difficult to disguise.' (Fox's *Correspondence*, iii. 349.)

His conduct at the time of the mutiny of the Nore forms a shameful instance of an English statesman subordinating to party animosity all considerations of patriotism in one of the darkest moments of his country's history; and the censure which is implied in the eulogy of Scott, that Fox at least *died* a Briton, may be amply justified by more than one passage in his correspondence. The French Revolution, as Burke had predicted, soon incarnated itself in a great military despotism, and Europe groaned under the appalling calamity of transcendent genius and energy united with gigantic power and employed in the service of the most colossal egotism and the most insatiable and unscrupulous ambition. But the Whig party assuredly gained no laurels during that fearful struggle. Their incessant cavils at Arthur Wellesley, the attempt of a large section of the party to arrest the action of the Government when the return of Napoleon from Elba threatened to reopen the chapter of calamities which had so lately been closed, the fashion that long prevailed among Radical writers and speakers of eulogising Napoleon and deploring the results of Waterloo,[1] very naturally disgusted and alienated their

[1] See e.g. Hazlitt's *Life of Napoleon*. Byron made no secret of the regret with which he looked on Waterloo. When the news was first told him, his only remark was, 'I'm d——d sorry for it,' and he published his sentiments in his *Age of Bronze*. Napier, the historian of the Peninsular War, said of Napoleon, in one place, that 'he was the only support of real freedom in Europe,' and in another that 'self had no place in his policy, save as his personal glory was identified with France and her prosperity. Never before did the world see a man soaring so high, and devoid of all selfish ambition.' (See Bruce's *Life of Sir W. Napier*, ii. 25.) Horner was no admirer of Napoleon, but he voted against the renewal of the war after the return from Elba. He wrote, at the beginning of the campaign which ended with Waterloo, that he fervently wished 'for a successful resistance by France to the invasion of the allies;' and when Waterloo had been fought, he deplored 'the degradation of our army in being the main instrument of this warfare against Freedom

countrymen. There were, no doubt, some exceptions in the party. The great secession from it in the beginning of the war showed that to many of its leading members party names were less precious than the real interests of their country. The language of Sheridan at the time of the mutiny of the Nore was very honourable to himself, though it is a strange illustration of the temper of the party that it should have been thought deserving of peculiar credit. Henry Grattan, who had never bowed the knee to the French Moloch, stood conspicuous in the small group of Whigs who loyally supported the Government at the time of the return from Elba. But the general tone of the Whig party during these terrible years could not be mistaken, and it was not until the reform agitation of 1832 effaced the memory of its foreign policy, and until statesmen of another stamp acquired an ascendency in its councils, that it regained its hold on the affections of the English people.

Into these later developments of English politics I do not propose to enter. The outbreak of the war of 1793 closing the peaceful period of the ministry of Pitt forms an appropriate termination for a history of England in the eighteenth century, though it will be necessary for the completion of my narrative to carry that portion of my work which relates to Ireland as far as the Legislative Union of 1800 and the failure of the

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and Civilisation.' (See *Horner's Life*, ii. 258, 274.) Mackintosh wrote an article for the *Edinburgh Review* censuring the war, and predicting that its consequences could be only disastrous and inglorious. The article was actually printed when the news of Waterloo arrived, and it was then hastily suppressed. Dr. Parr assured Ticknor in 1815 that he could not feel that he had done his duty if he went to bed any night without praying for the success of Napoleon. (*Ticknor's Life*, i. 50, 60.) Robert Hall said of Waterloo: 'That battle and its results seemed to me to put back the clock of the world six degrees.' (Hall's *Works*, vi. 124.)

measures of Catholic relief that were to have followed it. It remains for me now to give an outline of the chief social, industrial, and moral changes which accompanied the political movements that I have described, and which form a not less essential part of the history of the nation.

CHAPTER XXI.

In undertaking to write the history of England in the eighteenth century I had proposed to allot a considerable space to the history of manners and morals, to industrial developments, prevailing opinions, theories, and tendencies. One chapter in an earlier volume has accordingly been exclusively devoted to the social characteristics of that portion of the century which preceded the accession of George III., and another to religious tendencies and changes, and in describing the course of legislation and of parliamentary controversy I have seldom failed to enlarge upon those portions which throw some light upon the moral, material, or intellectual condition of the people. In the last chapters, however, these topics have been somewhat neglected. Foreign policy has occupied the foremost place, and the necessity of following in detail long courses of diplomatic correspondence has given a different character to my work. I propose in the present chapter to repair the omission, and, turning away in a great measure from the proceedings of statesmen and parliaments, to bring before my readers a number of scattered facts, illustrating from different points of view the habits, manners, conditions, and opinions of the different classes of the English people.

Glancing first of all at the upper orders, we shall be at once struck with the immense change which has passed over male attire since the eighteenth century. The contrast of colour between male and female dress

which is now so conspicuous then hardly existed; and rank, wealth, and pretension, were still distinctly marked by costly and elaborate attire. Nor was this simply true of the 'bucks,' 'beaux,' 'fribbles,' 'macaronis,' and 'dandies,' who represented in successive periods the extremes or the eccentricities of fashion. The neutral dress scarcely differing in shape or colour which now assimilates all classes from the peer to the shopkeeper was still unknown, and a mode of attire was in frequent use which survives only in Court dress, in the powdered footmen of a few wealthy houses, in City pageants, in the red coats of the hunting field, and in the gay colouring of military uniforms. The pictures of Reynolds and Gainsborough have made the fashionable attire of their period too familiar to need a detailed description, and it may be abundantly illustrated from contemporary literature. Thus, when Lord Derwentwater mounted the scaffold, he was dressed in scarlet, faced with black velvet and trimmed with gold, a gold-laced waistcoat, and a white feather in his hat. Dr. Cameron went to execution in a light-coloured coat, red waistcoat and breeches, and a new bag wig. One of Selwyn's correspondents describes a well-known highwayman who affected the airs of fashion as going to Tyburn dressed in a blue and gold frock, and wearing a white cockade as an emblem of innocence. Dr. Johnson's usual attire was a full suit of plain brown clothes, with twisted hair buttons of the same colour, black worsted stockings, a large bushy, greyish wig, and silver buckles; but on the night when his play of 'Irene' was first acted he thought it right to appear in the theatre in a scarlet waistcoat with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. Goldsmith went out as a physician in purple silk small-clothes, and with a scarlet roquelaure, a sword, and a gold-headed cane; and he had other suits which were equally conspicuous. Wilkes wrote to his daughter in

Paris, in 1770, asking her to beg Baron Holbach to purchase for him scarlet cloth of the finest sort and colour to make a complete suit of clothes, and the most fashionable gold buttons for the whole. He is described, by one of his friends, walking to town from a house which he had taken at Kensington, usually attired either in a scarlet or green suit edged with gold.[1]

In Parliament the variety of colouring easily lent itself to party designation. In the latter years of the Irish Parliament the brilliant uniforms of the Volunteers were conspicuous. In England, Fox and his followers wore the buff and blue which had been the uniform of Washington. On the other side of the House the dress of the Constitutional Club established in 1789 consisted of a dark blue frock with a broad orange velvet cape, large yellow buttons, and waistcoat and breeches of white kerseymere.[2] The ministers wore their stars and ribands, and North was habitually described in debate as 'the noble Lord with the blue riband.' The general use of Court dress and swords in Parliament died out before the end of the American war,[3] but they were still sometimes worn by a few old members,[4] and by the ministers on great occasions. Wraxall has given a graphic description of the sudden change that took

[1] See Angelo's *Reminiscences*, i. 55; Wilkes's *Correspondence* (by Almon); Boswell's *Johnson* (Croker's edition), pp. 61, 203, 269; Jesse's *Life of Selwyn*, i. 354, 355; and several illustrations collected by Mr. Forsyth in his *Novels of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 58, 59.

[2] *Bland Burges Papers*, p. 126.

[3] Townsend's *History of the House of Commons*, ii. 422.

[4] Wraxall gives the following description of Rigby as he appeared in 1781: 'As if he had meant to show that he acted independently of ministers, he never sat on the Government side of the House. . . . When in his place he was invariably habited in a full-dressed suit of clothes, commonly of a purple or dark colour, without lace or embroidery, close buttoned, with his sword thrust through the pocket.' (Wraxall's *Memoirs*, i. 539, 540.)

place in the appearance of the House upon the downfall of Lord North's ministry in 1782. 'The Treasury bench as well as the places behind it had been for so many years occupied by Lord North and his friends that it became difficult to recognise them again in their new seats, dispersed over the Opposition benches in great-coats, frocks, and boots. Mr. Ellis himself appeared for the first time in his life in undress. The ministers, their successors, emerged from their obscure lodgings or from Brooks's, having thrown off their blue and buff uniforms; now ornamented with the appendages of dress, or returning from Court decorated with swords, lace and hair-powder, excited still more astonishment.' Lord Nugent having lately been robbed, among other articles, of a number of laced ruffles, pretended that he saw them on the Treasury bench, and the appearance of Fox and Burke in full Court dress gave a point to the witticism.[1] At one period party spirit ran so high that it was carried even into the ordinary dress of private society. A scarlet waistcoat with gold buttons was well known to indicate an admirer of Pitt, and a buff waistcoast a follower of Fox, and enthusiastic Whig ladies delighted in appearing with foxes' tails as a head-dress.[2]

The professions were clearly marked by distinctions of dress. 'The medical character,' wrote Sir John Hawkins, speaking of a period a little before the middle of the century, 'whatever it is now, was heretofore a grave one. . . . The candidates for practice, though ever so young, found it necessary to add to their endeavours a grave and solemn deportment, even to affectation. The physicians in Hogarth's prints are not caricatures. The full dress with a sword and a great tie wig and the hat under the arm, and the doctors in consultation each smelling to a gold-headed cane shaped

[1] Wraxall's *Memoirs*, ii. 167, 168. [2] *The Lounger*, No. 10 (1785).

like a parish beadle's staff, are pictures of real life in his time; and I myself have seen a young physician thus equipped walk the streets of London without attracting the eyes of passengers.'[1] 'A physician,' said a character in Fielding's 'Mock Doctor,' which was published in 1732, 'can no more practise without a full wig than without a fee.'

In the early half of the century clergymen usually wore their gowns when walking in the streets of London. In the country the distinction was less marked. There were clergymen like the Buck Parson in 'Belinda,' or the squire-in-orders described by Colman in the 'Connoisseur,' or the workhouse chaplain in Crabbe's 'Village,' who almost wholly sank the character of a clergyman in that of a sportsman, and in general the distinction in tastes, habits, and occupations between the country clergyman and the small country gentleman was much less than at present. But, even in the country, till the last quarter of the century, a clergyman rarely appeared abroad without his cassock,[2] and long after wigs had fallen into general disuse they were habitually worn by the leaders of the Law and of the Church. Lord Eldon mentions that, at his wife's request, he applied to the King to be allowed to dispense with his wig when not engaged in official functions, but the King refused the permission, saying he would have no innovations in his time;[3] and a Bishop of London is said to have been refused admission to the royal closet because he had laid it aside. As late as 1850, King Ernest of Hanover wrote to one of his friends some curious and characteristic recollections of

[1] Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 238.

[2] Many particulars about clerical dress in the eighteenth century will be found in *Abbey and Overton's English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 469–471.

[3] Twiss's *Life of Eldon*, pp. 339, 340.

his boyhood, when he lived in England as Duke of Cumberland. 'I maintain,' he said, 'that the first change and shock in the ecclesiastical habits was the bishops being allowed to lay aside their wigs, their purple coats, short cassocks and stockings, and cocked hats, when appearing in public, for I can remember when Bishop Hurd of Worcester, Courtenay of Exeter, and Markham, Archbishop of York, resided in Kew and its vicinity, that as a boy I met them frequently, walking about dressed as I now tell you, in the fields and walks of the neighbourhood, and their male servants appeared equally all dressed in purple, which was the custom. The present Bishop of Oxford was the first who persuaded George IV. to be allowed to lay aside his wig, because his wife found him better looking without it.' 'Formerly,' writes the same old Tory King, 'all peers when a summons was issued never attended the House but dressed like gentlemen and peers, and not as they do now, like shopkeepers, horse-dealers, and tradesmen, with coloured neckcloths and boots. I remember when no minister came down to the House, having announced a motion, without being full-dressed, with his sword by his side.'[1]

A love of pageantry, greatly in excess of what now prevails, was shown in many other forms. George III. indeed, though extremely tenacious of the royal dignity, was by taste simple and domestic even to a fault; he scarcely ever received at his own table,[2] and the dinner in public at Hampton Court, which had been customary under his predecessors, was no longer held; but it was still the rule for every one to kneel to the King on entering his chamber.[3] A nobleman or a bishop rarely

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[1] Fonblanque's *Lives of the Lords Strangford*, pp. 183, 185.
[2] See Greville's *Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria*, i. 77.
[3] Jesse, *George III.* ii. 279.

visited a country town except in a carriage drawn by four horses. Travelling, being chiefly by private carriages, was, except in its humblest and most incommodious forms, almost a monopoly of the rich; and at a time when the roads were still infested by highwaymen, the many retainers who accompanied a great man on his journey were deemed necessary for his security as well as for his dignity. In this respect the moral and political influence of railways in levelling social distinctions has been very great. The pomp and extravagance of English funerals in all ranks had long been a subject of complaint, and in the case of men of high rank and sometimes even of rich tradesmen the custom of lying in state was still retained. Horace Walpole describes how 10,000 people pressed round the coffin of Lady Coventry, and how Lady Milton and Lady Betty Germain stood waiting in the mob in St. James's Square till they could see Lord Macclesfield lie in state.[1]

The position of the aristocracy was a more exceptional one than it now is, though their real power had sensibly diminished since the accession of George III. The war which the King had successfully carried on against the ascendency of the great families that had existed under his two predecessors, the great growth of the popular or democratic element in the Constitution, the lavish creations of North and Pitt, which nearly doubled the peerage without importing into it any proportionate accession of ability, and, finally, the rapid multiplication of commercial fortunes and of fortunes

[1] Walpole to Mann, Nov. 1, 1760; Walpole to Hertford, Mar. 27, 1764. See, too, Andrews' *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 49, 50. *The Connoisseur*, No. 39. In Scotland the expenses at a country gentleman's funeral are said to have sometimes equalled a full year's rent of his estate. Ramsay's *Scotland and Scotchmen of the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 74.

acquired in India, were all in their different ways abridging aristocratic influence. Still, that influence, though almost wholly unsupported by the invidious class privileges which prevailed on the Continent, was enormously great. The peers were the natural heads of that landed interest which it was one of the main objects of English law to make the predominant power in the country. They were the centre of a traditional popular reverence, unmistakable in its power and sincerity. They were a class who devoted themselves from early manhood and with extraordinary advantages to public life, and while they constituted one House of the Legislature, their borough patronage gave them an enormous influence over the decisions of the other. With the exception of a few eminent lawyers, who were readily welcomed into their ranks, almost all the higher posts of administration were in the hands of noblemen or of men of noble family. The two strongest ministries of the reign of George III. were the ministry of North, which lasted for twelve years, and the ministry of Pitt, which lasted for twenty. In the Cabinet of 1770 North himself and Sir Edward Hawke were the only members who were not in the House of Lords, while Pitt was at first the only commoner in the Cabinet of 1783.[1] The power of the nobility was supported by great wealth of the kind which carries with it most social influence, and by a superiority of education and manners which distinguished them far more than at present from the average country gentleman. It is not surprising, therefore, that the separation between the titled and untitled gentry should have been more marked than in our generation. In 'Humphrey Clinker' the nobleman refuses the satisfaction of a gentleman to the squire on

[1] See on this subject, Sir C. Lewis's *Administrations of Great Britain*, pp. 92, 93.

account of the inequality of their ranks, and an attentive reader of the light literature of the time will, I think, be struck with the degree in which the distinction between peer and commoner is accentuated. Wilberforce gives as one of his reasons for not desiring a peerage that it would exclude his children from intimacy with 'private gentlemen of moderate fortunes, and clergymen, and still more, mercantile men.'[1]

In one important respect a certain retrograde movement may be traced. The connection between the English nobility and the trading or commercial classes, which I have already had occasion more than once to notice, seemed to have disappeared. Notwithstanding the great prominence which commercial interests held in the policy of Pitt, and notwithstanding the immense number of the peerages which he created, the dignity of a British peerage was in his ministry scarcely ever conferred on any man whose fortune was made in commercial pursuits. In questions of peerages the royal influence is always extremely great, and 'through his whole reign,' it has been said, 'George the Third adopted as a fixed principle that no individual engaged in trade, however ample might be his nominal fortune, should be created a British peer.'[2] 'At no period in

[1] Wilberforce's *Life*, i. 392.

[2] Wraxall, *Posthumous Mems.* i. 66. Smith the banker, who was made Lord Carrington, was, Wraxall says, the sole exception. On the old connection between trade and the peerage, see Sir Bernard Burke's *Reminiscences, Ancestral and Historic*, pp. 82–84, 95, 98, 99. See, however, on the other hand, a curious letter of Lord Aberdeen in the Croker *Correspondence*. He says: 'Mr. Pitt has often been reproached for having been too prodigal of peerages, and Lord Carrington's has often been referred to especially, as introducing into the House of Lords a new description of person. I never heard Mr. Pitt speak on this subject himself, but I have heard the late Lord Melville say that Mr. Pitt always defended this creation on principle, and that he maintained the time was come when for the sake of the House of Lords it was desirable that it should not

the history of England,' wrote Burke in 1791, 'had so few peers been taken out of trade or from families newly created by commerce. In no period had so small a number of noble families entered into the counting-houses. I can call to mind but one in all England, and his is of near fifty years' standing.'[1]

The space of two long lives is sufficient to bridge the chasm that separates us from a society which would appear as strange to our eyes as the figures of a fancy ball. With the many purely capricious changes or fluctuations of fashion we need not concern ourselves here. The contraction or dilation of the hoops of ladies' dresses; their long trains; the passion for tight-lacing, which was carried so far that Lady Crewe on her return from Ranelagh once rushed up to her bedroom, calling her maid instantly to cut the laces or she would faint; the pyramids of false hair, which rose so high that Rogers recollected driving to Ranelagh with a lady who was compelled to sit on a stool placed on the floor of the carriage; the taste for ornaments made of straw, which, under the patronage of the Duchess of Rutland and a few other great ladies, became general about 1783; the muffs that were carried, and the high heels that were worn by men of fashion; the large gold or amber-headed canes of the physician; the many forms of wigs; and the many changes in the shape, size, and trimmings of hats, have been abundantly described by the chroniclers of fashion. There were some changes, however, which fall properly within the province of this book as indicating important revolutions in the habits or relations of classes.

Sir John Hawkins, in some interesting notes on

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be closed against commercial eminence any more than other well-founded pretensions.' (Croker's *Correspondence*, ii. 302.)

[1] 'Thoughts on French Affairs,' *Works*, vii. 24.

those which took place in the forty years that elapsed between the writings of Addison and the appearance of the 'Rambler,' in 1750, mentions especially that during that time the outward distinctions of trades and professions had been steadily fading. The clergyman dressed more like a layman. 'The apron, the badge of mechanic occupations in all its varieties of stuff, was laid aside.' Physicians discarded their great wigs, and assumed what Boswell called the 'levity of bag wigs.' Lawyers ceased to wear black except in the actual exercise of their profession.[1] Wigs soon after passed out of general use except in the professional classes. In 1765 the peruke-makers presented a curious petition to the King, complaining bitterly of the growing custom of gentlemen wearing their own hair, employing foreigners to dress it, and when they employed natives obliging them to work on the Lord's Day;[2] and they begged the King to discountenance these usages by his example. Some of the peruke-makers who presented this petition had themselves conformed to the custom they reprobated, which so excited the indignation of the mob that they seized them and cut off their hair.[3] About 1780, as I have already had occasion to notice, the custom of wearing swords at social gatherings and in places of public resort began to go out of fashion, and about the same time a very important addition was made to the comfort of life, and especially to that of the less opulent classes, by the general use of the umbrella.

Its history is not without interest. In Queen Anne's time it is mentioned both by Swift and Gay as employed

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[1] Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 261.

[2] This was also a complaint of Hannah More. See her *Thoughts on the Manners of the Great.*

[3] *Annual Register*, 1765, p. 64.

by women,[1] but up to the middle of the eighteenth century it appears never to have been used in England by men, though Wolfe, the future conqueror of Quebec, wrote from Paris in 1752 describing it as in general use in that city, and wondering that so convenient a practice had not yet penetrated to England. Hanway, the famous traveller and philanthropist, who returned to England in 1750, is said to have been the first Englishman who carried an umbrella; and a Scotch footman, named John MacDonald, who had travelled with his master in France and Spain, mentions in his curious autobiography that he brought one to London in 1778 and persisted in carrying it in wet weather, though a jeering crowd followed him, crying, 'Frenchman, why don't you get a coach?' In about three months, he says, the annoyance almost ceased, and gradually a few foreigners and then some Englishmen followed his example. Defoe had described an umbrella as one of the contrivances of Robinson Crusoe, and umbrellas were in consequence at one time called 'Robinsons.' They were long looked on as a sign of extreme effeminacy, and they multiplied very slowly. Dr. Jamieson in 1782 is said to have been the first person who used one at Glasgow, and Southey's mother, who was born in 1752, was accustomed to say that she

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[1] 'The tucked-up sempstress walks with hasty strides
While streams run down her oil'd umbrella's sides.'
Tatler, No. 238.

'Good housewives all the winter's rage despise
Defended by the riding hood's disguise;
Or underneath th' umbrella's oily shed
Safe through the wet on clinking pattens tread.
Let Persian dames th' umbrella's ribs display
To guard their beauties from the sunny ray;
Or sweating slaves support the shady load
When Eastern monarchs show their state abroad;
Britannia's winter only knows its aid
To guard from chilly showers the walking maid.'
Gay's *Trivia*.

remembered the time when anyone would have been hooted who carried one in the streets of Bristol. A single coarse cotton one was often kept in a coffee-house to be lent out to customers, or in a private house to be taken out with the carriage and held over the heads of ladies as they got in or out; but for many years those who used umbrellas in the streets were exposed to the insults of the mob, and to the persistent and very natural animosity of the hackney coachmen, who bespattered them with mud and lashed them furiously with their whips. But the manifest convenience of the new fashion secured its ultimate triumph, and before the close of the century umbrellas had passed into general use.[1]

In the last years of the century the inventions of Arkwright and Crompton were effecting a complete transformation in female dress, and greatly modifying the dress of men.[2] The costly silks which had hitherto been so prominent in the ordinary attire of the upper classes almost disappeared; woollens greatly diminished, and the cottons, muslins, and calicoes which were now produced in such cheapness, and with such endless and graceful variety, came into general use. And while these great inventions were changing and simplifying English dress and almost obliterating the external distinction of classes, a great wave of fashion in France was moving in the direction of a republican simplicity. It had its origin chiefly in the admiration for the Americans and in the influence of Rousseau, and we may soon trace its imitation or its counterpart in England. Wrax-

[1] Sangster on Umbrellas; Roberts's *Social History of the Southern Counties*, p. 560; Southey's *Commonplace Book*, i. 574; Pugh's *Life of Hanway*, p. 221; John MacDonald's *Life and Travels* (1790), pp. 282, 283. Several particulars about the use of umbrellas will be found in the valuable collections relating to public manners made by Francis Place. (British Museum, Add. MSS. 27827.)

[2] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 81.

all, who was a keen observer of such matters, attributes it largely to the example of Fox. In early life this statesman had been a typical man of fashion, and there is a curious description of him in an old magazine as he appeared as a young man, with 'his *chapeau bras*, his red-heeled shoes, and his blue hair-powder;' but during the American war he gave another turn to the prevailing fashion. 'Mr. Fox,' says Wraxall, 'and his friends, who might be said to dictate to the town, affecting a style of neglect about their persons, and manifesting a contempt for all the usages hitherto established, first threw a sort of discredit on dress. From the House of Commons and the clubs in St. James's Street it spread through the private assemblies of London. But though gradually undermined and insensibly perishing of an atrophy, dress never totally fell till the era of Jacobinism and of Equality in 1793 and 1794.'[1]

This period indeed marks a complete revolution in English dress. It was then that the picturesque cocked hat went out of fashion and was replaced by the tall hat, limp indeed, and coloured, but of the same ungraceful shape as that which now prevails.[2] Then, too, the silver buckle was exchanged for the ordinary shoe tie. Muslin cravats, pantaloons, and Hessian boots came into fashion, and the mode of dressing the hair was wholly changed. Like the Roundheads of the seventeenth century, the democrats of the eighteenth century adopted the fashion of cutting the hair short, and they also discarded as inconsistent with republican simplicity that hair-powder which, since the abolition of wigs, had been invariably worn by the upper

[1] Wraxall's *Memoirs*, i. 135.

[2] Fairholt's *History of Costume*, p. 398; Ashton's *Old Times*, p. 56. The shape, however, had more than once been worn in much earlier periods. It may be seen, among other pictures, in Rembrandt's *Night Watch*.

classes. It is interesting to notice that, among the young students at Oxford who were foremost in taking this step, were Southey and Savage Landor.[1] But the new fashion would hardly have prevailed so quickly had it not been supported by other influences. Pitt's tax upon hair-powder, which was imposed in 1795, had a considerable effect. The law contained, indeed, a long and curious list of exemptions, which shows how completely the use of hair-powder was then looked upon as a social necessity. In addition to the royal family and their servants, clergymen not possessing 100*l.* a year, subalterns in the army, and officers in the navy under the rank of masters and commanders were exempted, and in private families all daughters except the two eldest.[2]

The tax was a guinea a head, and it was expected to produce 210,000*l.* a year, but it was soon very generally evaded. Many, through the pressure of economy, gave up the use of powder. A few great Whig families, and among them the House of Russell, discarded it as a protest against the French war, which the tax contributed to support;[3] and when corn rose shortly after the outbreak of the war almost to famine price, most men deemed it a matter of charity and patriotism to prevent a large and useless expenditure of flour. Hair-powder was abandoned at court, and in a short time it totally disappeared from fashionable attire.[4]

From this time English male dress assumed substantially its modern aspect, though the love of bright and contrasted colours was not immediately replaced by the Puritan sobriety which now prevails.[5] Like all

[1] Forster's *Life of Savage Landor*, i. 47, 48.

[2] *Ann. Reg.* 1795, p. 179.

[3] See Ashton's *Old Times*, p. 61.

[4] Full particulars about the abandonment of hair-powder will be found in Fairholt's *History of Costume*; Ashton's *Old Times; Pictorial History*, vii. 760, 761.

[5] See the interesting remarks of Mr. Mozeley, *Reminiscences of Towns and Villages*, i. 414.

great changes of fashion, this was not effected without producing some severe temporary distress,[1] and if it has added considerably to the simplicity and inexpensiveness of life, if it has diminished or destroyed a great sphere of vanity and weakness, it will hardly, I suppose, be denied that the world has lost something by the total banishment of all ideas of beauty and grace from one great department of human things. Wraxall, in a book which was published in 1815, declared that the two preceding centuries had scarcely produced a greater alteration in respect to dress, etiquette, and form, than the last forty years, and that a costume which, at the end of that period, was confined to the Levee and Drawing-room, was in the beginning of it worn 'by persons of condition, with few exceptions, everywhere and every day.'[2]

The growing simplicity of English dress must not, however, be regarded as any index of the decline of luxury. Wealth had been increasing with great rapidity to the eve of the American war, and though English

[1] Thus a pamphleteer in 1798 writes: 'The whole tribe of stay-makers must now be in extreme distress because the female sex have thought proper to throw off their bodice. The silk and stuff weavers must be equally wretched from the universal wear of linen and muslin; the buckle-makers can be little less embarrassed from the general adoption of leather shoe-strings, and the unfortunate corps of hair-dressers are consigned to misery and despair by the new generation of round-heads.'—*Essay on the Political Circumstances of Ireland under Lord Camden*, pp. 89, 90.

[2] Wraxall's *Mems.* i. 135. Some curious particulars of the way in which the ordinary dresses of fashionable life in one generation were utilised for the theatre in the next will be found in Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs* (1790), iv. 86–88. He says: 'Thirty years ago not a Templar or decent dressed young man but wore a rich gold-laced hat and scarlet waistcoat with a broad gold lace . . . also laced frocks for morning dress,' and he mentions that his actors still occasionally wore, 'for old characters of wealth, a suit of purple cloth with gold vellum holes that I frequently wore when a young man as a fashionable dress.'—Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, iv. 87, 88.

prosperity was then for a time severely checked, a rapid revival took place during the Administration of Pitt. The political importance which the Indian Nabobs obtained may have perhaps produced some exaggeration of their social weight, but it is impossible not to be struck with the great and baneful influence which was constantly ascribed to them. I have already quoted the eloquent sentences in which Chatham deplored the sudden influx of Asiatic wealth, which, not being 'the regular natural produce of labour and industry,' was bringing in its train Asiatic luxury as well as Asiatic principles of government. Burke looked upon the invasion with at least equal alarm. Voltaire, in a letter to Chesterfield written about 1772, expressed his belief that Indian wealth had so corrupted England that she had now entered upon her period of decadence,[1] and Horne Tooke, as we are told by his biographer, 'observed of English manners that they had not changed by degrees, but all of a sudden; and he attributed it chiefly to our connection with India that luxury and corruption had flowed in, not as in Greece like a gentle rivulet, but after the manner of a torrent.'[2]

The prevailing types of amusement had not very materially changed since the first half of the century. Ranelagh and Vauxhall still retained their popularity, but not their position, for formidable rivals were drawing away the upper classes. Almack's Rooms were opened in 1765, a subscription of ten guineas entitling the members to a weekly ball and supper for twelve weeks, but their real attraction was the deep play, of which they soon became the special centre.[3] Nearly at the same time, Madame Cornelys, a foreign singer,[4]

[1] *Annual Register*, 1773, p. 217.

[2] Stephens's *Life of Horne Tooke*, ii. 488.

[3] Jesse's *Life of Selwyn*, i. 360, 366.

[4] She is called so by Walpole. See, too, the account of her in

who was described by Walpole as the 'Heidegger of her age,' opened a social club called 'The Society,' at Carlisle House in Soho Square; and her assemblies, her subscription balls, her 'harmonic concerts,' and, above all, her masquerades, for a few years attained the wildest popularity. Masquerades were constantly spoken of as one of the chief demoralising influences of the time, and Horace Walpole mentions one which so emptied the House of Commons as to produce an adjournment. The taste, however, like many others, fell as suddenly as it had arisen, and the brilliant manager, who had for some years chiefly provided the fashionable amusements in London, ended her days in the Fleet Prison. The Pantheon, a splendid assembly room intended as a winter Ranelagh, was opened in Oxford Street in 1770. It was the first great work of James Wyatt, and it for a time enjoyed much popularity. Gibbon mentions a subscription masquerade there which cost the subscribers no less than 5,000*l.*, but a few years later the taste diminished, and the Pantheon was converted into an ordinary concert room and theatre.[1]

In 1764, by the King's order, the immemorial custom of playing hazard on Twelfth Night at Court was discontinued, and the King afterwards issued strict orders that no gaming was to be allowed in the royal palaces.[2] But, in spite of royal precept and example, and in spite also of a number of laws which had in the preceding reign been enacted against gaming,[3] there was as yet little or no diminution of this passion.

the *Memoirs of Casanova*. In Edwards's *Anecdotes of Painting*, p. 69, she is said to have been by birth an Irishwoman.

[1] Walpole to Mann, ii. 82–84, 96, 97, 133, 134, 149; *Ann. Reg.* 1771, pp. 139, 140; see, too, Miss Burney's *Evelina*; Ashton's *Old Times*, pp. 217–224; Angelo's *Reminiscences*, i. 88–97.

[2] Jesse's *George III.* i. 245. *Correspondence of George III. and Lord North*, i. 237, 238.

[3] For a summary of the many laws against gaming, see *Blackstone*, bk. iv. ch. xiii. § 8.

Charles Fox once said that the highest play he had ever known was between 1772 and the outbreak of the American war,[1] and the statement seems to be corroborated by Horace Walpole.[2] About 1780 faro superseded loo as the popular game, and, although it was one of those which a law of George II. had distinctly specified as illegal, it was notoriously carried on at the houses of several ladies of the first position in society. In 1796 Chief Justice Kenyon delivered a charge in which he dwelt on this scandal, and threatened to send even the first ladies of the land to the pillory if they were convicted before him, and Gillray caricatured three of the most conspicuous of the offenders as 'Faro's daughters' standing in the pillory. In the following year Lady Buckinghamshire and two other ladies of position were, in fact, condemned, not, indeed, to the pillory, but to pay fifty pounds each for illegal gambling. It was proved that they had gaming parties by rotation in each other's houses, and sat gambling till three or four in the morning.[3] Private lotteries had been already condemned by law, but public lotteries were still annually instituted by authority of Parliament. They gave rise to a multitude of frauds and abuses, and to a great additional system of gambling in the form of an insurance of undrawn tickets, and the Corporation of London in 1773 presented a petition to the House of Commons praying for their suppression. Such a measure found little or no support, but a law was passed in 1778 which put an end to some of their abuses, and reduced the number of dealers in lottery tickets in England to fifty-one. In the previous year there had been more than four hundred lottery offices in London and its neighbourhood.[4]

[1] See a note to Croker's *Boswell*, p. 501.

[2] *Letters to Mann*, ii. 283.

[3] See Ashton's *Old Times*, pp. 166–182.

[4] 18 George III. c. 22; Mac-

The growing lateness of the hours, which we have noticed during the first sixty years of the century, still continued. In the country, it is true, the fox-hunter was already in his saddle at break of day, and at the universities it was not until the last quarter of the century that the old dinner hour of twelve was abandoned;[1] but the House of Commons during the reign of George III., and especially during the American debates, sat later than it had ever done before,[2] and Horace Walpole, when an old man, complained bitterly of the difficulty he found in adapting his habits to the increased lateness of London hours. 'Everything,' he wrote in 1777, 'is changed. . . . I do not like dining at nearly six, nor beginning the evening at ten at night. If one does not conform, one must live alone.' 'The present folly is late hours. Everybody tries to be particular by being too late. . . . It is the fashion now to go to Ranelagh two hours after it is over. You may not believe it, but it is literal. The music ends at ten; the company go at twelve. Lord Derby's cook lately gave him warning. The man owned he liked his place, but said he should be killed by dressing suppers at three in the morning.'[3] Among the minor social habits which may be noticed was the introduction from France about 1770 of the custom of visiting not in person, but by cards;[4] and a great increase of lounging rides on horseback. Burke noticed the latter as a serious check to economy among the gentry. 'Few beside elder

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pherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 620; Adolphus, iv. 211, 213.

[1] Bishop Watson's *Anecdotes of his Life*, i. 35; Gilbert Wakefield's *Life*, i. 153.

[2] Townshend's *Hist. of the House of Commons*, ii. 380, 382–389; *Correspondence of George III. and Lord North*, i. 281.

[3] *Letters to Mann*, iii. 7, 30, 112. See, too, on the hours of the eighteenth century, Gomme's *Gentleman's Magazine Library, Manners and Customs*, pp. 16, 17.

[4] Walpole's *Last Journals*, ii. 12.

brothers,' he added, 'ever thought of riding in the middle of the day, except on particular occasions, till within the last thirty years. . . . Men who could have no other object but that of sauntering made more use of their limbs.'[1]

Hard drinking among the upper orders, though it had diminished, was still very common, almost imposed by the social code, practised by men who conducted the affairs of the nation, and countenanced to an extreme degree by the example of the heir to the throne.[2] There were hackney coachmen who derived their chief gains from cruising at late hours through certain quarters of the town for the purpose of picking up drunken gentlemen. They conveyed them to their homes if they were capable of giving their address; and, if not, to certain taverns where it was the custom to secure their property and to put them to bed. In the morning the coachman called to take them home, and was in general handsomely rewarded.[3] Horace Walpole describes a violent quarrel at the Opera, which was due to Lord Cornwallis and Lord Allan having come in drunk and insulted Mr. Rigby in the pit. The memoirs, the correspondence, and the novels of the time are full of illustrations of the prevalence of the vice, and they show also the coarseness and the violence of manners it brought with it, the oaths which were constantly on the lips of men of fashion, the persecutions with which young ladies of beauty and distinction were often pursued in public places, the coarse and stupid practical jokes which were the fashion, and which were especially directed against foreigners.[4] At the same time it is certain that in

[1] This was noticed by Burke in one of his conversations with Mrs. Crewe.

[2] Some curious particulars about the excessive drinking of the Prince of Wales will be found in the recently published reminiscences of Wraxall.

[3] Walker, *The Original*, p. 41.

[4] Many particulars on this sub-

these respects a great improvement had been already effected, and the decline of drinking in the upper orders both in England and Ireland, though perhaps not in Scotland,[1] is universally admitted. Dr. Johnson, who boasted that he had himself drunk when at college as much as three bottles of port at a sitting without being the worse for it, and who afterwards gave up all wine-drinking on the ground that he found it impossible to drink it in moderation, was accustomed to say that he remembered the time 'when all the decent people of Lichfield got drunk every night and were not the worse thought of;' and he ascribed the change chiefly to the general substitution among the smaller gentry of wine for ale.[2] Lord Shelburne could remember when in some country districts 'several of the best gentlemen, members for the county, drank nothing but beer.[3] The change to a more expensive beverage naturally diminished drunkenness, but much must also be ascribed to a growing and general refinement. It was noticed that smoking had also decreased in England during the latter half of the eighteenth century, though it speedily revived during the great French war.[4] With the decline of drinking, and also with the increased comfort of home life, taverns had in a great degree lost the place which they had held in the Elizabethan period, and especially at the time of the Restoration, as the centres of social gatherings; but they were still employed much more than in the present day for the transaction of business,

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ject will be found collected in Mr. Forsyth's admirable little book on the *Novelists of the Eighteenth Century*, a book which has helped me much in the present chapter.

[1] On the great drunkenness in Scotland during the latter half of the eighteenth century, see Chambers's *Traditions of Edinburgh*.

[2] Boswell (Croker's ed.), pp. 282, 578.

[3] Shelburne's *Life*, i. 51.

[4] Boswell's *Johnson*, p. 282.

and in the middle of the century more than twenty of them were clustered round the Royal Exchange.[1]

The public fencing-matches with swords, which had grown up in England after the parliamentary wars, which had been extremely popular under Anne and under George I., and which seldom ended without some effusion of blood, had now almost passed away. The most famous were held in the bear-garden of Hockley in the Hole, but 'assaults of arms' were also common entertainments in taverns and coffee-houses. Figg, who was one of the last great fencing-masters of the eighteenth century, is remembered by a sketch of Hogarth, and the Italian Domenico Angelo as a lover of Pegg Woffington, a friend of Sheridan and Garrick, the founder of a school of fencing which has continued to the present day, and the father of a writer who has left not only a classical work on his own art, but also some curious reminiscences of his time.[2] With the decline of fencing the love of boxing increased, and the brutalities of the prize-ring were never more popular than in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Bull-baiting, however, was now but little attended, except by the mob, and it was attacked in Parliament, and very frequently from the pulpit. The bull-running at Tutbury, which is said to have been practised from the days of John of Gaunt, was finally suppressed in 1778 by the Duke of Devonshire in virtue of his office as

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[1] See an interesting sketch of the history of taverns in Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, pp. 87, 88.

[2] An admirably complete account of these fencing-matches and of all the other matters relating to that art in England will be found in Mr. Egerton Castle's valuable work on *Schools and Masters of Fence* (1885). Angelo, who was a very graceful horseman, sat as a model for the equestrian statue of William III. in Merrion Square, Dublin. A number of extracts from old newspapers relating to the different kinds of prize-fights will be found in the works of Andrews and of Mr. Ashton.

Steward of Tutbury.[1] The cockpit was patronised chiefly for its association with gambling; but the stream of public sentiment in the centres of fashion was manifestly running against it, though many members of the aristocracy were attached to it, and though it probably flourished as much as ever in country villages and towns. When the King of Denmark visited England in 1768 he was taken to a fox-chase and a cock-fight as typical English amusements.[2] One of the figures in Hogarth's picture of a cock-fight commemorates the curious fact that Lord Albemarle Bertie, who was totally blind, was among the most assiduous and enthusiastic devotees of the sport.[3]

Horse-racing was steadily increasing. It was naturally favoured by the improved means of communication, which made it more easy to attend the chief centres, and it does not appear to have been seriously affected by the tax which Pitt imposed in 1784 on every horse that was entered for a race, and on every plate that was won. It was mentioned during the discussion of these taxes that about five hundred plates were annually run

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[1] Compare Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, pp. 279, 280. Blaine's *Encyclopædia of Rural Sports*, p. 129.

[2] Jesse's *Life of Selwyn*, ii. 328.

[3] Nicholl's *Memoirs of Hogarth*, p. 368. 'The following instance,' writes Blanco White, 'will show you to what degree the passion for bull-fights can grow. A gentleman of my acquaintance had some years ago the misfortune to lose his sight. It might be supposed that a blind man would avoid the scene of his former enjoyment, a scene where everything is addressed to the eye. This gentleman, however, is a constant attendant at the amphitheatre. . . . Upon the appearance of every bull he greedily listens to the description of the animal and of all that takes place in the fight. His mental conception of the exhibition, aided by the well-known cries of the multitude, is so vivid that when a burst of applause allows his attendant just to hint at the event that drew it from the spectators, the unfortunate man's face gleams with pleasure, and he echoes the last clappings of the circus.'—Doblado's *Letters from Spain*, pp. 158, 159.

for in England.[1] The first three Hanoverian sovereigns did not patronise the racecourse as warmly as the Stuarts, but several members of the royal family gambled greatly at Newmarket. The Derby, the Oaks, and the St. Leger were all founded in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and to this period also belong James Layman and George Stubbs, the first considerable English painters of racehorses. Coursing, also, which had long been popular as a form of hunting, appears then, for the first time, to have been treated on a considerable scale as a form of racing or gambling, and the earliest coursing clubs in England seem to have been established in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century.[2] Fox-hunting, which as a separate sport is almost a creation of the eighteenth century, was steadily advancing in its prominence among English field-sports, though the strict preservation of foxes was not yet common.[3] The new passion for sea-side watering-places produced a new form of amusement in the regatta, which was first introduced from Venice in 1775.[4]

The latter half of the eighteenth century may be regarded as the golden age of the English theatre. It saw Garrick, Macklin, and Barry in their prime; it witnessed the splendid rise of John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, as well as the lighter graces of Miss Farren, Mrs. Jordan, and Mrs. Abington, and at a

[1] See the curious debate on the subject, *Parl. Hist.* xxiv. 1251, 1252.

[2] See Blaine's *Encyclopædia of Rural Sports*, pp. 584–586. Lord Wilton's *English Sports in their Relation to English Character*, pp. 165–175.

[3] Thus Campbell, in a book published in 1774, wrote: 'The fox . . . is not only pursued by dogs for sport, but destroyed everywhere and by every method that can be devised.'—*Political Survey of Great Britain*, ii. 208. Arthur Young complains that hares were sometimes so numerous as to be very injurious to husbandry in England, otherwise he makes no complaint of excessive game preservation.—*Political Arithmetic*, p. 205.

[4] *Annual Register*, 1775, p. 216.

time when the great Shakspearian revival was at its height, it also produced the plays of Goldsmith, Sheridan, Foote, and Home. There was an incontestable improvement in the moral tendency, and still more in the refinement of the theatre, and it was noticed that a coarseness which excited no reprobation under George I. was no longer tolerated on the stage.[1] The revolt of popular feeling against the legislative discouragement of the theatre had now become very marked. A statute of Anne had placed all actors in the category of 'rogues and vagabonds,'[2] but the Licensing Act of 1737 had restricted this stigma to those who acted without authority by patent from the King, or licence from the Lord Chamberlain.[3] The same Act, besides imposing a censorship on plays, had provided that neither the Crown nor the Lord Chamberlain should have any power to authorise theatrical performances for money in any part of Great Britain, except in the city of Westminster and in places where the King was residing, and there only during the period of his residence. But this grave encroachment on the liberties of the people ran violently counter to public opinion, and this part of the law appears to have been almost wholly inoperative. In the very curious memoirs of Tate Wilkinson, who was one of the most active provincial managers and actors of his time, we have abundant evidence that the old theatres in provincial towns were not suppressed, that new theatres were opened, and that in the last days of George II. and the early years of George III. there was scarcely a second-rate town in England in which dramatic entertainments were not publicly performed, sometimes by local actors, sometimes by actors from London or Dublin. There was a company at Ports-

[1] See Wraxall's *Post. Mems.* iii. 49. [2] 12 Anne, stat. 2, c. 23.
[3] 10 Geo. II. c. 28.

mouth, which performed also regularly at Plymouth and Exeter. There was the Bath Company, which sometimes visited Winchester and the Isle of Wight. There was the Yorkshire Company, which made its rounds through the northern towns;[1] and even Edinburgh, in spite of the violence of Scotch Presbyterianism, had a considerable place in theatrical history. Plays were for many years acted there by itinerant companies in the Tailors' Hall in the Cowgate, and in 1746 a theatre was opened in the Canongate, though, as the historian of the Scotch theatre truly says, without the sanction of the law, and in defiance of an Act of Parliament. Foote acted at Edinburgh in 1759, and three years earlier, Home, though himself a Presbyterian minister, had scandalised his brethren by bringing out his 'Douglas' on the boards of the Canongate Theatre.[2]

Soon the policy was adopted of passing special Acts of Parliament enabling the Crown to authorise Theatres Royal in provincial towns. A theatre was thus patented at Edinburgh in 1767, at Bath and at Norwich in 1768, at York and at Hull in 1769, at Liverpool in 1771, at Manchester in 1775, at Chester in 1777, at Bristol in 1778. A Bill for licensing a theatre at Birmingham was thrown out in 1777, after a debate which supplies some curious illustrations of the open manner in which the prohibitory clause of the Act of 1737 was disregarded. The petition came from the manager of a theatre already existing in the town, and it was urged in opposition to it that it had no considerable popular support; that, with the exception of one period of three

[1] Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, i. 210, 221, ii. 227. See, too, the same writer's *Wandering Patentees, or History of the Yorkshire Theatres*; Warner's *History of Bath*, p. 364.

[2] Jackson's *History of the Scottish Stage*, p. 25; Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, ii. 73, 74; Chambers's *Traditions of Edinburgh*, pp. 322–324. In 1764 Wilkinson was asked to act at a new theatre which had just been finished at Glasgow, *Memoirs*, iii. 223.

years, during which, on account of some grave abuses, actors had been banished, there had been for many years an abundance of theatrical representations in Birmingham; that two unlicensed theatres had been very recently opened, and that a pernicious system existed in the town of obliging workmen to take tickets for the theatre instead of wages. Under these circumstances, the House thought that no licensed theatre was required, and it does not appear to have been much moved by the incontestable truth of the remark of Wilkes, that during all the many years in which the Birmingham magistrates had permitted unlicensed players to perform, they had been of their own authority suspending the law of the land—the very offence for which James II. had been driven from the throne.[1]

In 1788 a new system was introduced, by an Act authorising magistrates under certain restrictions to license theatrical performances.[2] London actors had already begun to make annual tours through the provinces. At first the badness of the roads, the jealousy of the provincial companies, and the notion of their own dignity had deterred them, and Tate Wilkinson claims to have been the first actor from London who had explored the country playhouses. When, however, he published his memoirs in 1790, he noticed that 'almost every theatrical star now deigned to shine in all the principal theatres of the three kingdoms,' and that Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Jordan, and other leading actors made their true golden harvest in their summer excursions out of the metropolis.[3] He has also noticed the remarkable fact that in matters of decency and morals the London actors found their audiences in the provinces

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xix. 198–205. Another curious discussion on the state of theatres will be found in *Parl. Hist.* xviii. 632–643.

[2] 28 George III. c. 30.

[3] Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, ii. 164, iv. 94, 95.

much more severe or fastidious than those in the metropolis.[1] In the meantime great improvements were taking place in the London theatres in the widening of the stage, in the beauty of the dresses, in the variety and appropriateness of the scenery. One play, it was said, in 1790 cost as much to put on the stage as three plays fifty years before.[2] The opera retained its full popularity, and this period is especially remarkable in the history of domestic music for the introduction of the pianoforte. This instrument—the source of much pleasure and of much annoyance—grew out of the harpsichord; it appears according to the best accounts to have been invented by Cristofoli of Padua about 1711; but it advanced slowly into note, and no pianoforte seems to have existed in England till the middle of the century. It first became generally known by being brought on the stage at Covent Garden in 1767; in the last twenty years of the century it became common in the orchestras of the English theatres, and it gradually crept into most of the houses of the upper classes.[3]

In the history of English painting, the latter half of the eighteenth century is also a period of capital importance. The complete absence of institutions for the instruction of art students, and the utter indifference shown both by the Court and the aristocracy towards

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[1] 'A farce, if it possesses true humour, in London will be greatly relished and applauded; in the country, very possibly, the same (even decently acted) will be termed vile, low, vulgar, and indelicate. The *Love for Love* of Congreve, the *Trip to Scarborough*, the *Way of the World*, the *Confederacy*, and others, are in London attended to as plays of wit and merit (witness their constant repetition), but in the country not permitted, or if permitted to appear, not upon any account fashionable, which is just as bad.'—Wilkinson's *Mems.* iii. 119.

[2] See numerous particulars of the changes in the London theatres in *The Mirror*, a treatise appended to the fourth volume of Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*.

[3] Rimbault's *Hist. of the Pianoforte*, pp. 133, 139.

native art, had made the preceding half-century one of the most dreary periods of English art history, and native artists would have often found it scarcely possible to subsist if they had not found a wide, though very humble, field of employment in the innumerable signboards which still distinguished the London shops.[1] Towards the close of this period, it is true, the great genius of Hogarth succeeded in winning him a competence, but this was mainly due to the popularity of his prints. The prices given for his greatest pictures are a significant illustration of the prevailing taste. In 1745 he sold no less than nineteen of the most celebrated, including 'The Harlot's Progress,' 'The Rake's Progress,' 'The Strolling Players,' and 'The Four Times of Day,' for four hundred and twenty-seven guineas and seven shillings. Five years later he sold the six great pictures of 'Mariage à la Mode' for one hundred and twenty guineas, though the frames had cost him more than a fifth of that sum. The 'March to Finchley' was disposed of by a raffle. The four election pictures he endeavoured to dispose of in the same way, but the subscriptions proved miserably insufficient, and Garrick showed a real generosity in giving two hundred guineas for these pictures, which were resold in 1823 for sixteen hundred and fifty.[2]

There were soon, however, some faint signs that the long night was breaking, and that a real interest in art, and even in native art, was arising. Rouquet, an enamel painter, who had lived in London for thirty years, published in 1755 an account of the state of art in England, and while deploring its miserable condition, and the almost exclusive and undiscriminating patronage of

[1] See vol. ii. p. 162. See, too, on the number of good artists who painted signboards, *Annual Register*, 1770, pp. 181–186; Smith's *Nollekens and his Times*, i. 25–27.

[2] Nicholl's *Life of Hogarth*, pp. 44, 279–281; Pye's *Patronage of British Art*, pp. 149–151.

foreign works, he added that during the preceding twenty or thirty years auction rooms for pictures had been greatly multiplying, and the interest in art sales increasing. The Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Manufactures, which was established in 1754, distributed considerable sums in prizes to native artists, and under its auspices annual exhibitions of pictures began in 1760. This society was chiefly founded by the exertions of a private gentleman named Shipley, after the model of the similar society which had been established in Dublin by Mr. Madden; and, with the exception of a grant of 500*l.* from the Corporation of London, it was entirely supported by private subscriptions. Something was done for English artists by the Dilettante Society; by the liberal patronage of Drummond, Archbishop of York, and especially by the Duke of Richmond, who opened a school and gallery for art instruction in his own house, and placed the Florentine painter, Cipriani, at the head of it.

A 'Society of Artists of Great Britain' was established in 1761, and was incorporated by royal charter in 1765; and Reynolds, Gainsborough, Wilson, and West had already emerged into notice. The first great artist, who had returned from Italy in 1752, rose in a few years to wealth and fame. He had not, indeed, the power, the imagination, or the perfect knowledge of the human frame that characterised the greatest masters on the Continent; his occasional excursions into historical and sacred art produced little of enduring value, and even in his own lifetime the fugitive character of his exquisite but too superficial colouring was plainly seen; but his children had scarcely been surpassed in art since Raphael and Correggio, and no portrait painter since Vandyke had delineated the nobler and more refined types of adult beauty with a more perfect dignity and grace. The foundation of the Royal

Academy under his presidency in 1768 is as important an event in the history of British art as the foundation of the Royal Society a century earlier had been in the history of British science. The portraits of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney; the landscapes of Gainsborough, Wilson, and Barrett, and the historical pictures of West, Barry, and Copley at once gave England a high place in the art history of the eighteenth century, while the lectures of Reynolds and the annual exhibitions of the Academy immensely widened the area of art interest.

The progress of art owed very little to the patronage of the Court. It was noticed that in the first eight years of his reign, though the King saw a succession of the finest pictures of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Wilson at the autumn exhibitions, he did not give a single commission to any one of them.[1] He disliked Reynolds, who was on intimate terms with the leading Whigs, and in 1764, when the office of Court painter became vacant by the death of Hogarth, Reynolds was passed over and the post was given to Ramsay. Gainsborough, it is true, was afterwards on several occasions commissioned to paint the King or members of his family, but the painter who was the special object of royal patronage was West. Between 1769 and 1801 he received no less than 34,187*l.* for pictures painted for the King,[2] and Court favour gave him for a time a position among English artists wholly different from that which he holds in the eyes of posterity. The great school of English landscape grew up in spite of extreme neglect. Wilson lived and died in poverty, and though the portraits of Gainsborough were eagerly sought for, his exquisite landscapes were unsold and unappreciated. But the new school of portraiture in England soon drove all foreign rivalry from the field, though the prices given

[1] Pye's *Patronage of British Art*, p. 140. [2] Ibid. p. 230.

to its greatest representatives would appear strangely moderate if measured by the standard of our own age. Reynolds at first charged ten guineas for his three-quarter-length portraits, twenty guineas for his half-lengths, and forty guineas for his whole-lengths, and these prices were raised in successive periods to fifteen, thirty, and sixty; to twenty-five, fifty, and one hundred; and finally to fifty, one hundred, and two hundred guineas. Gainsborough painted portraits at first at five, and soon after at eight guineas for a head, and he finally settled at forty guineas for a half-length and a hundred guineas for a whole-length portrait. Romney, who was for a time looked upon as a formidable rival to Reynolds, is said to have made in his most prosperous days about 4,000*l.* a year from his portraits.[1]

In other forms of art the progress was less marked. In architecture little was done which has elicited the admiration of posterity, though Sir William Chambers, the Brothers Adam, Wyatt, and Robert Taylor had all a great reputation in their generation. Somerset House, which was designed by Chambers, is probably the most imposing work of English architecture in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and this period is distinguished for the number and magnificence of the great country houses that were erected,[2] and also for the first

[1] Edwards' *Anecdotes of British Painting*; Taylor and Northcote's *Life of Reynolds*; Brock-Arnold's *Gainsborough*; Redgrave's *Century of Painters*; Pilkington's *Dictionary of Painters*. Sir G. Elliot wrote in 1789: 'Gainsborough's pictures are selling for 200*l.* to 500*l.* apiece' (*Life of Sir Gilbert Elliot*, i. 308). Kneller, who after the death of Lely had a more undivided ascendency than any artist under George III., and who was notorious for his love of money, charged for his portraits fifteen guineas for a head, twenty if with one hand, thirty for a half, and sixty for a whole length (*Annual Register*, 1764, p. 53). Some particulars about the prices of pictures under Queen Anne will be found in Ashton's *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, pp. 279–282.

[2] Mr. Ferguson reckons that at least two hundred great 'ma-

feeble signs of that revival of Gothic architecture which in the nineteenth century became so conspicuous.[1] In European sculpture the star of Canova shone supreme; but England possessed in Bacon, Banks, Nollekens, and above all Flaxman, native artists of incontestable merit. Wedgwood was at the same time producing his beautiful pottery works; Boydell gave a world-wide reputation to British engraving,[2] and there was in all forms a rapid diffusion of artistic taste. It was noticed that before the great popularity of Hogarth's prints and the Act of 1735 establishing copyright in engravings, there were but two print shops in the whole of London; but after this Act they soon appeared in the most various quarters of the town.[3] Horace Walpole, who was himself an old and intelligent collector, has preserved some curious particulars of the change which had in his own lifetime passed over English taste. 'We have at present,' he wrote in 1770, 'three exhibitions. One West, who paints history in the taste of Poussin, gets 300*l.* for a piece not too large to hang over a chimney. . . . The rage to see these exhibitions is so great that sometimes one cannot pass through the streets where they are. It is incredible what sums are raised by mere exhibitions of anything; a new fashion and to enter at which you pay a shilling or half-a-crown. Another rage is for prints of English portraits. I have been collecting them for about thirty years, and originally never gave for a mezzotinto above one or two shillings. The lowest are now a crown; most from half a guinea to a guinea.

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norial mansions' were erected in England and Scotland during the eighteenth century (*History of Modern Architecture*, p. 328). Many particulars relating to them will be found in Dallaway's *Progress of the Arts*.

[1] These beginnings are minutely traced in Sir C. Eastlake's *Revival of Gothic Architecture*.

[2] See Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 183–185.

[3] Pye, pp. 42, 43.

. . Scarce heads in books not worth threepence will sell for five guineas. Then we have Etruscan vases made of earthenware in Staffordshire, from two to five guineas, and ormolu, never made here before, which succeeds so well that a tea-kettle, which the inventor offered for one hundred guineas, sold by auction for one hundred and thirty.'[1] The pictures of the old foreign masters had risen in equal proportion. Two thousand pounds were given for a picture of Guido, and the price of old paintings had tripled or quadrupled in a single lifetime.[2]

While the great artistic development was giving a new ply to popular taste in England, and attracting to the pursuit of art a rapidly increasing and often an excessive stream of students,[3] there was a corresponding movement in the spheres of literature and science. Whatever controversy there might be about the comparative value of the additions made to human knowledge in the eighteenth and in preceding centuries, there could be no question of the fact that the eighteenth century was pre-eminently the century of the diffusion of knowledge. The great discovery of the lightning conductor by Franklin, as well as his admirable history of electricity, gave an immense popularity to this branch of science,[4] and the marvellous discoveries of the French chemists, the impulse which Buffon had given to the study of natural history, and the example of the scientific enthusiasm which ran so high in the world of fashion at Paris, had all their influence in England. 'Natural

[1] Walpole's *Letters to Mann*, ii. 97.

[2] Ibid. ii. 235, 273.

[3] 'The swarm of young artists who have been students in the Royal Academy, has overstocked the capital and country so much that I am told many of them are at present in the utmost indigence.' — Twining's *Country Clergyman in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 127.

[4] Moritz, a Prussian traveller who visited England in 1782, was much struck with this. See Pinkerton, ii. 518.

history,' Horace Walpole wrote in 1770, 'is in fashion.'[1] Goldsmith, with the smallest possible knowledge of the subject, found it profitable to place his graceful pen at its service, and his 'Animated Nature' had probably some considerable influence in extending the taste. Dr. Hill, who had been appointed by George III. gardener at Kensington, was one of the first persons who put scientific knowledge in a popular shape by the system of publishing in numbers. Walpole says he made fifteen guineas a week by working for wholesale dealers, and that he was employed at the same time on six voluminous works on botany, husbandry, &c., which were published weekly.[2] The many popular scientific works of Priestley greatly assisted the movement. A taste for public lectures now sprang up, and a great literature of compilations arose. The 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' which was completed in 1797, though far inferior in genius and influence to the corresponding work in Paris, was incomparably superior to any similar work which had appeared in England, and numerous systematic works were written on particular sciences, alphabetically arranged in the form of dictionaries.[3]

There was still a great want in London of really public libraries accessible to all students. The library belonging to the Chapter of Westminster, the library of Sion College, and the library of Archbishop Tenison,[4] it is true, already existed, and in the course of the century a considerable library was accumulated by the Royal Society; but the British Museum, though rich in manuscripts, was still miserably poor in printed books, and Gibbon complained bitterly that an English

[1] Walpole to Mann, ii. 96.

[2] Walpole to Zouche, Jan. 3, 1761.

[3] See an interesting review of this branch of literature in Miller's *Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, iii. 109–116.

[4] Ashton's *Queen Anne*, p. 294.

writer who undertook to treat any large historical subject was reduced to the necessity of purchasing the books which must form the basis of his work, and that 'the greatest city of the world was still destitute of a public library.'[1] Circulating libraries, however, which have had a great importance in the diffusion of literary tastes, belong especially to the latter half of the eighteenth century. The exact date of their origin is disputed, but they certainly existed a few years before the middle of the century, and in its last thirty years they multiplied rapidly, not only in London, but in the provincial towns. In 1800 it is stated that there were not less than a thousand circulating libraries in Great Britain.[2] Book clubs and societies were at the same time formed. All important controversies became in their style and method more popular, and a vast literature of novels sprang into existence, at once producing and representing a greatly increased love of reading.

Much attention was also paid to children's literature. Very few books in any age or country have exercised so great an empire over the tastes and sympathies of many successive generations of boys as 'Robinson Crusoe,' which was published in 1719, or as 'Sandford and Merton,' which was published in instalments between 1783 and 1789, and it was in the eighteenth century that the fairy visions of the 'Arabian Nights' were first thrown open to the English imagination. Nor should we forget the many books for little children which were published shortly after the middle of the century by Newberry, Griffith Jones and

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[1] Gibbon's *Vindication, Miscellaneous Works* (ed. 1814), iv. 591, 592. See, too, a speech of Wilkes on the state of libraries in England, *Parl. Hist.* xix. 188–192.

[2] See Miller's *Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, iii. 304; Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, i. 392, 393; Forsyth's *Novels of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 156; *Annual Register*, 1761, p. 207.

his brother. 'Goody Two Shoes,' 'Giles Gingerbread,' 'Tommy Trip,' and a crowd of other little masterpieces, combining in different degrees amusement and instruction, replaced the rude chapbooks which had formerly been hawked about and were the forerunners and the models of a vast literature which is not one of the least characteristic and important products of the nineteenth century.[1]

The blue-stocking clubs, which were so popular about 1781, were signs of the desire of ladies of fashion to give a more serious and literary character to female society, and the admirable letters of Lady Mary Montagu, Mrs. Montagu, and Mrs. Delany show the high level of intelligence to which they sometimes attained. The unprecedented multiplication of female authors was a significant feature of the time. It reflected that steady improvement of female education which had been in progress through the century, and it had a great influence in banishing coarseness from English literature, in stimulating those branches of it which are most in harmony with female aptitudes and tastes, and in destroying the foolish prejudice which had long treated serious studies as unbecoming in a woman. Of the female literature of the eighteenth century, it is true, very little remains. The history of Mrs. Macaulay, which Walpole classed with the histories of Robertson, and which Madame Roland pronounced to be hardly inferior to Tacitus, has long since sunk into a darkness as black as that which covers the equally famous 'Botanic Garden' of Darwin, and the still more popular 'Meditations' of Hervey. Few modern readers turn the pages of Hannah More, Charlotte Smith, Mrs.

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[1] Much information relating to Newberry and his publications has lately been collected by Mr. Charles Welsh in his *Bookseller of the last Century*.

Radcliffe, Miss Seward, Mrs. Chapone, Mrs. Trimmer, or the learned Mrs. Carter; and the beautiful lines of Mrs. Barbauld, which still linger in the memory of thousands, were written in extreme old age and long after the century had closed. Some of these writers played a useful, though subordinate and ephemeral, part in the great religious and educational movements of their time. Others were in their day deservedly popular novelists; but they have been displaced by changing tastes and by the ever increasing throng of their successors. The 'Rights of Woman' of Mary Wollstonecroft, however, still retains some historic interest as perhaps the first English example of a class of literature and speculation which has since become very prominent. The 'Evelina' of Miss Burney will long be read as the most faithful picture of the fashionable amusements of its generation; and the last years of the century produced the earliest writings of Maria Edgeworth, who as a novelist may be justly placed in the same high rank as Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot.

The manners of the gentry all over the country were steadily and rapidly assimilating. The distinction between the nobility and the other gentry, and the immense distinction between town and country, were both diminishing. In the middle of the eighteenth century there were still thousands of country gentlemen who had scarcely ever been farther from their homes than their county town, while among the poor the habits of life had been for generations almost unchanged. Among them at least there was as yet no religious scepticism, no political agitation, no class antagonism, scarcely any curiosity about the outer world, and, until sixty or seventy years of the century had passed, singularly little social or economical change. The standard of material well-being was on the whole high and steady,

and life glided on smoothly and uneventfully amid the same landmarks. It was common in country districts for a Sunday suit to descend from father to son. It was put on when the church bell rang and carefully put aside when the service had concluded, and in this way dresses of far bygone generations were still in actual use. Many years after the middle of the eighteenth century, it was stated that beaver hats made in the reign of Charles II. might be often seen in the village churches.[1] The reprobation, half prejudice, half duty, with which all prolonged visits of a country gentleman to the metropolis were regarded, had once been one of the strongest of English feelings. It may be seen in the laws against the increase of London; in the early opposition to stage coaches; in the apprehensions which no less a man than Swift expressed of the social evils that would result from annual meetings of Parliament. But with the improvement of roads and public conveyances the whole type of country life was rapidly changing. The weekly stage coach now brought down the latest London fashions to the remote country village. An annual visit to London or to a seaside watering-place became the ambition of every county family. London actors appeared in the neighbouring county town. Provincial circulating libraries brought down London books, and the provincial press was year by year rising in importance. Before the close of the eighteenth century there were already more than seventy provincial newspapers in England.[2]

We have already seen the signs of this change in the first half of the century, and as early as 1761 a writer has given a vivid picture of its progress. 'It is scarce half a century ago,' he says, 'since the inhabitants of

[1] *Annual Register*, 1769, p. 142.
[2] Andrews' *History of British Journalism*, i. 274.

the distant counties were regarded as a species almost as different from those of the metropolis as the natives of the Cape of Good Hope. Their manners as well as dialect were entirely provincial, and their dress no more resembled the habit of the town than the Turkish or Chinese. . . . A journey into the country was then considered almost as great an undertaking as a voyage to the Indies. The old family coach was sure to be stowed, according to Vanbrugh's admirable description of it, with all sorts of luggage and provisions, and perhaps in the course of the journey a whole village, together with their teams, were called in aid to dig the heavy vehicle out of the clay. . . . But now the amendments of the roads with the many other improvements of travelling have opened a new communication between the several parts of our island. . . . Stage coaches, machines, flys, and post-chaises are ready to transport passengers to and fro between the metropolis and the most distant parts of the kingdom. . . . The manners, fashions, amusements, vices and follies of the metropolis now make their way to the remotest corners of the land; . . . the notions of splendour, luxury, and amusement that prevail in town are eagerly adopted ; the various changes of the fashions exactly copied, and the whole manner of life studiously imitated. . . . We are no longer encountered with hearty slaps on the back, or pressed to make a breakfast on cold meat and strong beer, and in the course of a tour of Great Britain you will not meet either a high-crowned hat or a pair of red stockings. . . . The country ladies are as much devoted to the card-table as are the rest of the sex in London. . . . They have their balls and concerts by subscription, their theatres, their Mall, and sometimes their rural Ranelagh and Vauxhall. The reading female hires her novels from some country circulating library, which consists of about one hundred volumes. The merchant

or opulent hardware man has his villa three or four miles distant from the great town where he carries on his business. . . . French cooks are employed, the same wines are drunk, the same gaming practised, the same hours kept, and the same course of life pursued in the country as in town. . . . Every male and female wishes to think and speak, to eat and drink, and dress and live after the manner of people of quality in London.'[1]

The spread of refined and intellectual tastes, and the great diminution among the country gentry of ignorance, coarseness, drunkenness, and prejudice might at first sight be regarded as an unmixed good, but it must not be forgotten that these things were purchased by the almost absolute disappearance of a class of men who, with some vices and with many weaknesses, have played a useful and memorable part in English life and history. I have traced in an earlier volume the first stages of the decline,[2] and an excellent observer, who wrote about 1792, has noticed that the preceding forty or fifty years had witnessed the total destruction in England of the once common type of the small country squire.

He was an 'independent gentleman of three hundred per annum, who commonly appeared in a plain drab or plush coat, large silver buttons, a jockey cap, and rarely without boots. His travels never exceeded the distance of the county town, and that only at assize and session time or to attend an election. Once a week he commonly dined at the next market town with the attorneys and justices. He went to church regularly, read the weekly journal, settled the parochial disputes between the parish officers at the vestry, and afterwards adjourned to the neighbouring alehouse, where he usually got drunk for the good of his country. He never played at cards

[1] *Annual Register*, 1761, pp. 205–208.
[2] Vol. ii. pp. 200, 201.

but at Christmas, when a family pack was produced from the mantelpiece. He was commonly followed by a couple of greyhounds and a pointer, and announced his arrival at a neighbour's house by smacking his whip and giving a view-halloo. His drink was generally ale, except on Christmas, the 5th of November, or some other gala-day; when he would make a bowl of strong brandy punch, garnished with a toast and nutmeg. A journey to London was by one of these men reckoned as great an undertaking as is at present a voyage to the East Indies, and undertaken with scarce less precaution and preparation. The mansion of one of these squires was of plaster, striped with timber, not unaptly called callimanco work, or of red-brick; large casemented bow-windows; a porch with seats in it, and over it a study; the eaves of the house well inhabited by swallows, and the court set round with hollyhocks; near the gate a horse-block for the conveniency of mounting. The hall was furnished with flitches of bacon, and the mantelpiece with guns and fishing-rods of different dimensions, accompanied by the broadsword partisan and dagger borne by his ancestor in the civil wars. The vacant spaces were occupied by stags' horns. Against the wall was posted King Charles's Golden Rules, Vincent Wing's Almanac, and a portrait of the Duke of Marlborough; in his window lay Baker's "Chronicle," Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," Glanvil on "Apparitions," Quincey's "Dispensatory," "The Complete Justice," and a book of Farriery. In a corner by the fireside stood a large wooden two-armed chair, with a cushion, and within the chimney-corner were a couple of seats. Here at Christmas he entertained his tenants, assembled round a glowing fire made of the roots of trees; and told and heard the traditionary tales of the village, respecting ghosts and witches, while a jorum of ale went round. The best parlour, which was never open but on particular

occasions, was furnished with Turk-worked chairs, and hung with portraits of his ancestors; the men in the character of shepherds, with their crooks, dressed in full suits and huge full-bottomed perukes; others, in complete armour, or buff coats, playing on the base-viol or lute. The females likewise, as shepherdesses, with the lamb and crook, all habited in high heads and flowing robes.'[1]

'These men and their houses,' continues the author from whom I am citing, 'are no more.' Everything, indeed, seemed against them. New modes of farming had arisen which the little country gentleman did not understand, and which required a capital he did not possess; and the pressure of taxation grew continually more heavy. 'Lord North's American war,' wrote Bishop Watson, doubtless with some exaggeration, 'rendered it difficult for a man of 500*l.* a year to support the station of a gentleman; and Mr. Pitt's French war has rendered it impossible.'[2] But, above all, the change of manners made his position untenable, and, clinging with great tenacity to his dignity as a gentleman, he found himself exposed to a social competition which he was wholly unable to support. The substitution of wine for beer, the annual visit to London or the seaside, the sudden introduction of town fashions soon plunged him into debt, while the high price he could obtain for his little estate from the large neighbouring landowner became irresistible. A very few, no doubt, of the more enterprising or fortunate of the small country gentlemen succeeded in enlarging their estates. A few others found new paths to wealth in the plains of India, and possibly even in some of the opening fields of manufacturing industry. Others became dependants

[1] Grose's *Olio*, pp. 41–44.

[2] Watson's *Anecdotes of His Own Life*, ii. 253.

of great men and obtained places under the Government; but the great majority either sank into tenant farmers or passed into the army, which was soon to draw away an ever-increasing portion of the manhood of England, and for which their hardy country habits made them peculiarly fit.

Of the history of the small proprietors who were simply yeomen, and who farmed their lands without making any pretension to the position of gentlemen, it is difficult to speak with confidence, for the evidence we possess is curiously scanty. Growing extravagance in this class also was tending to their obliteration, and economical causes were acting in the same direction. In the early years of the nineteenth century, however, freehold or copyhold farms might be still found scattered through every county. In parts of Wales, in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Yorkshire, in Shropshire, Essex, and Kent, and in parts of Sussex, Derbyshire, and Gloucestershire they were still very numerous, and there is reason to believe that the immense profits of farming produce during the great French war for a time not only maintained, but in some parts of England considerably increased, their number.[1] But the sudden fall of prices at the peace ruined multitudes of small proprietors, many of whom had bought their land at the extravagantly high rate which war prices had produced, and from this time the decay of the class was rapid and almost complete.

[1] Arthur Young noticed in 1807 that this was especially the case in Essex. Thirty-six years before he had found it divided into enormous farms, but during the war it became profitable to divide them and sell them in small lots. The fullest account I have seen of the evidence about the yeomen at the end of the eighteenth century is in an article by Mr. John Rae in the *Contemporary Review*, October 1883. See, too, the remarks on this subject in that powerful, but one-sided and exaggerated work, Kay's *Social Conditions and Education of the People*, i. 364–367.

English law and custom favouring the agglomeration of land have, no doubt, had some influence, but the main causes may, I think, be found elsewhere. On the one side there is the desire of the large landowner to buy. The social consequence which the possession of a great estate produces; the 'land hunger' which becomes with some men a passion scarcely less strong than the passion for drink, and the excessive and wholly extravagant preservation of game which has grown up within the present century, have all contributed to it; and the increased luxury of country life makes men desire to surround their country places with an increased area of productive land. The innumerable fortunes made in commerce and manufactures have multiplied small country places held for enjoyment, but they have tended powerfully to the extinction both of yeomen and of gentlemen farmers, for they have brought into the market a new class of purchasers who care little for money and much for social position, and who seek to attain the latter by purchasing large quantities of land. The natural tendency also of a very wealthy class is towards investments which offer perfect security and a prospect of improvement, even at the cost of abnormally small present returns; and when the great man of the county wishes to buy, he commonly finds few competitors. It is very doubtful, however, whether the pressure of those who wish to buy has been a stronger influence than the pressure of those who wish to sell. In a great commercial and manufacturing country, the owner of a small freehold can almost always increase his income by selling. If he is improvident and falls into difficulties, this is his natural way of extricating himself, and when a provident owner sees his children growing up and knows that he can only provide for one of them on his land, while he can start all of them in life by the proceeds of its sale, he will probably press the great land-

owner in his neighbourhood to buy, and to allow him to continue in occupation as a tenant. This is, I believe, the experience of most wealthy landlords; and it is to this economical process much more than to any feudal laws that the concentration of land in a few hands has in modern times been due.

The main governing influence of the transformation of manners which has been described in the preceding pages, is to be found in the improvement of roads and of means of locomotion, a subject that meets us at every turn when examining the industrial and social, and even the moral, political, and intellectual history of the eighteenth century. The legislation in England relating to roads has passed through two or three distinct phases. Originally by common law every parish was obliged to keep the roads that intersected it in good condition, but the first general law on the subject appears to have been that of Philip and Mary, which provided that every parish should annually elect two surveyors and that all the inhabitants should be obliged, under their direction, to provide labourers, carriages, and tools for four days in each year to work upon the roads.[1] With the increase of wealth, however, and consequently of locomotion, this system proved insufficient; and among the many great reforms that were adopted under Charles II. the introduction of turnpikes is not the least memorable.

It followed quickly on an important change in the means of locomotion. In the early part of the seventeenth century travelling in England had been mainly

[1] 2 and 3 Philip and Mary, c. 8. Compare the article on Roads in M'Culloch's *Account of the British Empire*, and Chalmers' *Estimate*, pp. 30, 31. Chalmers mentions an Act of Edward I. for enlarging the breadth of highways from one market town to another, but it was intended rather to prevent robberies than to facilitate locomotion. Some particular roads were also amended by Acts of Parliament under Henry VIII.

on horseback. Horses might be hired on the chief roads at stations about ten miles apart, generally at the charge of from $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ to $3d.$ a mile; but in some counties it was possible to hire a horse for $3d.$ a day and its food. There were also long covered waggons, very slow and tedious, which were employed chiefly by women and by those who were too poor to possess or hire horses, and too weak to travel on foot. About 1640 stage coaches came into use, and they so far superseded the old ways of travelling that a writer in 1672, who was bitterly opposed to them, complained that at that date the saddle-horses bred or kept in England were not a fourth part as numerous as before the new vehicles had begun. He mentions that there were already many stage coaches running in the neighbourhood of London, and that they also connected the metropolis with York, Exeter, Chester, Northampton, Salisbury, Bristol, and Bath.[1]

The improvement in travelling advanced very slowly. The new turnpike roads were extremely unpopular, and fierce mobs—sometimes taking for their rallying cry the words of the prophet, 'Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths'—frequently attacked and destroyed the turnpikes.[2] A law of George II. made this offence a felony, but it is stated that in the middle of the century a traveller seldom saw a turnpike for two hundred miles after leaving the vicinity of London.[3] English roads were said to have been at this time greatly inferior to the roads of France and of some other continental countries,[4] and the well-known description which Macaulay has given of their condition in the last

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[1] See a curious tract called 'The Grand Concern of England Explained,' *Harleian Miscellany*, viii. 561–571.

[2] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1749, pp. 376, 377.

[3] Chalmers' *Estimate*, p. 110.

[4] Ibid. p. 128; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1749, pp. 218, 219; 1752, pp. 517–520, 552–554.

years of the seventeenth century might be still applied with little change. The coach from London now arrived at Oxford or at Portsmouth in two days, at York or Exeter in four, at Edinburgh sometimes in three weeks, sometimes in as little as ten days.[1] In winter the journey was much longer than in summer, and in many districts the roads were for long periods impassable. On some of the Sussex roads it was necessary in winter to attach oxen to the carriages. Defoe met a lady near Lewes driven to church in her coach by six oxen, along a road so stiff and deep that no horse could go in it, and he mentions that there were roads in this county of such a character that after heavy winter rains, a whole summer was insufficient to make them passable. Horace Walpole speaks of roads in a similar condition in the immediate neighbourhood of Tunbridge Wells. The antiquary Pennant has left a vivid description of his journey from Chester to London. Six long days were consumed, and sometimes as many as eight horses were required to drag the coach from the slough. Beyond Chester the traveller encountered a far more terrible obstacle in the great crag of Penmaenmaur, which crossed the way to Holyhead, rising more than fifteen hundred feet precipitously from the sea, and it was not till 1772 that Parliament consented to improvements which deprived this part of the main road to Ireland of serious danger.[2] But the last forty years of the

[1] A number of particulars about the rate of travelling at this time will be found in Southey's *Commonplace Book*, iii. 76, 77, 86, 87; Thrupp's *History of Coaches*, pp. 105, 106; Miller's *Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, iii. 320; Andrews' *Eighteenth Century*; Ashton's *Social Life under Queen Anne*; Roberts' *Social History of the Southern Counties*. The most extraordinary instance of rapid communication from the north (doubtless on horseback) is said to have been in 1772, when a great bankruptcy in Edinburgh was known in London forty-three hours after (*Annual Register*, 1772, p. 109).

[2] See Evans' *Beauties of North Wales*, pp. 463–465; Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, i. 152, 153.

eighteenth century produced a great and general revolution in English roads. After the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle many Bills were passed for the formation of turnpike roads, and after the Peace of Paris in 1763 the work was taken up with renewed energy. In the first fourteen sessions of the reign of George III. not fewer than 452 Acts were passed for repairing the highways in different districts.[1]

The improvements, though very great, were for many years only partial. Arthur Young, in his journeys through England, kept a minute record of the state of the roads, and it shows us that though much had been already done, many even of the turnpike roads were in 1768 and 1770 in the most disgraceful state. On the great road from Wigan to Preston, which was one of the most important in the north, he measured ruts which were four feet deep, and 'floating with mud only from a wet summer,' and in a drive of eighteen miles he passed no less than three carts which they had shattered. The turnpike road to Warrington seemed, he said, as if it were made 'with a view to immediate destruction, for the breadth is only sufficient for one carriage, consequently it is cut at once into ruts, and you will easily conceive what a breakdown, dislocating road ruts cut through a pavement must be.' The turnpike to Altringham was 'if possible worse than that to Preston. It is a heavy sand which cuts into such prodigious ruts that a carriage moves with great danger. These sands turn to floods of mud in any season the least wet.' The road to Manchester was 'so narrow that only one carriage can move at a time, and that consequently in a line of ruts.' The turnpike road to Newcastle, he writes, 'is a paved causeway as narrow as can be conceived, and cut into perpetual holes, some

[1] Chalmers' *Estimate*, p. 128.

of them two feet deep measured on the level. A more dreadful road cannot be imagined, and wherever the country is the least sandy the pavement is discontinued and the ruts and the holes most execrable. I was forced to hire two men at one place to support my chaise from overthrowing in turning out for a cart of goods overthrown and almost buried. Let me persuade all travellers to avoid this terrible country, which must either dislocate their bones with broken pavements or bury them in muddy sand.' Beyond Newcastle to the north lay a country in which no wise men would travel except through absolute necessity. 'I would advise all travellers to consider this country as sea, and as soon think of driving into the ocean as venturing into such detestable roads.' 'I am told,' he continues, 'the Derby way to Manchester is good, but further it is not penetrable.' In Essex he describes a road to Tilbury as 'for near twelve miles so narrow that a mouse cannot pass by any carriage;' overshadowed except in a few places by trees that were totally impervious to the sun, and so bad that twenty or thirty horses were sometimes employed to drag the chalk waggons one by one out of the ruts.[1]

In the last quarter of the century these evils were for the most part remedied, and English roads became equal, if not superior, to those of any continental country.[2] 'The fatigue of travelling in stage-coaches on such roads as have been described may be easily con-

[1] Young's *Northern Tour*, iv. 423–436. Young's *Tour through the South of England and Wales*, pp. 88, 318–320. See, also, on the state of the roads, Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, iii. 142, 143.

[2] Adam Smith, however, draws a contrast between the great post roads in France, which were in general kept in good order and often much superior to the English turnpike roads, and the French cross roads, 'that is, the far greater part of the roads of the country,' which were 'entirely neglected.' *Wealth of Nations*, book v. ch. i. See, too, Arthur Young's *Travels in France*.

ceived, especially when it is remembered that for many years after the middle of the century stage-coaches had no springs.[1] But the last years of the century produced great improvements in vehicles, the most important being the establishment of the mail-coaches of Palmer in 1784. Previous to this time the post had been sent by the old conveyances, though other and much more rapid ones were running. Thus the diligence to Bath performed the journey from London in seventeen hours, but the post in forty hours, and on other roads there was an equal difference. But the new mail-coaches surpassed all that had preceded them in speed and in comfort, and in 1797 Palmer was able to state before a parliamentary committee that three hundred and eighty towns which had previously had but three posts a week, and forty which had no posts at all, had now daily posts, and that on many roads letters were conveyed in a third or even a fourth of the time which had previously been taken.[2]

Almost every step in the improvement of locomotion in England was taken in the face of considerable opposition. In the beginning of the reign of Charles I. there were not more than twenty hackney-coaches in London, and those who desired them were obliged to send for them to the stables; but in 1635 a proclamation of the King and Council complained that they had so multiplied as to disturb the streets and raise the price of hay and provender, and ordered that no hackney-coach should be suffered in London or Westminster unless it was to travel at least three miles beyond it.[3] The stage-coaches of the Restoration were vehemently assailed

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[1] Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, iii. 136, 137. See, too, the amusing description of the German traveller, Moritz, Pinkerton, ii. 566, 567.

[2] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 53, 54; *Pictorial History*, vii. 668; *Annual Register*, 1775, p. 191.

[3] Rushworth's *Historical Collections*, ii. 316, 317.

as discouraging horsemanship and the breed of horses in England, as drawing the country gentry from their duties to the dissipations of London, and as injuring great numbers of particular industries. The riots against turnpikes almost assumed the dimension of local insurrections; and when the faster stage-coaches were introduced, the old waggoners endeavoured to defeat the competition by systematically driving their broad and heavy waggon-wheels through the ruts made by the stage-coaches, so as to make the roads impossible for fast travelling.[1] In 1785 an Act was passed exempting mail-coaches from tolls,[2] but heavy duties both on post-horses and on all public as well as private conveyances hampered communications, and the evil was aggravated by the adoption of the wasteful and almost discredited system of farming-out the duty on post-horses to publicans.[3] But, in spite of all obstacles, the latter years of the eighteenth century witnessed a revolution in the internal communications of England which has only been surpassed by the enormous changes effected in our own century by the agency of steam.

Its effects were incalculably great. Confining ourselves for the present to the tastes, habits, and sentiments of the more educated classes, its first result was an immense impulse given to the love of travelling both in England and in foreign countries. The extreme insularity of English life was disappearing. I have already quoted passages showing the great increase in the number of foreigners who visited England, and in the intellectual communication between England and France. The employment of foreign servants in England had become a characteristic feature of the time, and excited

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[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1752, pp. 517–520, 552–554.

[2] 25 George III. c. 57.

[3] Ibid. c. 51. 27 George III. c. 26. *Sinclair on the Revenue*, ii. 383–385.

much discontent. We have seen the petition of the peruke-makers to the King in 1765. In 1795 a petition, signed by more than ten thousand livery servants, against the employment of foreigners in that capacity was presented to the House of Commons, but as it was not seconded it was not received.[1] Two years earlier a similar petition had been presented by Grattan to the Irish House of Commons.[2] In families of wealth and rank a foreign tour had long been the usual termination of an education, and in the early years of the century groups of English and Scotch students might have been found in several of the foreign universities. The great Lord Chatham was once a student at Utrecht.[3] Charles Townshend, Fielding, and Wilkes were partly educated at Leyden.[4] In Scotland, during the greater part of the eighteenth century, education in a Dutch or French university was generally considered the best preparation for the professions both of law and of medicine.[5] But in the latter half of the century the movement towards the Continent was much more general, and foreign travel became the predominating passion of a large portion of the English people. 'Where one Englishman travelled,' wrote an acute observer in 1772, 'in the reigns of the first two Georges, ten now go on a grand tour. Indeed, to such a pitch is the spirit of travelling come in the kingdom, that there is scarce a citizen of large fortune but takes a flying view of France, Italy, and Germany in a summer's excursion.'[6] Gibbon wrote from Lausanne describing the crowd of

[1] Ashton's *Old Times*, p. 316.

[2] *Irish Parliamentary Debates*, xiii. 395–397.

[3] *Chatham Correspondence*, iii. 107.

[4] See, on the number of British students at Leyden, the *Autobiography of Dr. Alexander Carlyle*, and also an *Index of English-speaking Students at Leyden*, by Mr. Peacock, published by the Index Society.

[5] Dugald Stewart's *Dissertation*, pp. 550, 551.

[6] *Letters concerning the present State of England*, p. 240.

English who were already thronging the beautiful shores of Lake Leman, and he mentions that he was told—though it seemed to him incredible—that in the summer of 1785 more than 40,000 English—masters and servants—were upon the Continent.[1] The same love of travelling and the same taste for natural scenery were shown at home, and Wilberforce complained bitterly that the solitude and quiet of Westmoreland were gone, and that 'the tour to the Lakes had become so fashionable that the banks of the Thames were scarcely more public than those of Windermere.'[2]

The closer contact between town and country life, the revelation to a cultivated and intellectual town-world of the majestic scenes of natural beauty, and the infusion of a new refinement, perception of beauty, and intellectual activity into country life, contributed largely to a memorable change which was passing over the English intellect. The empire which the great writers of the age of Anne, and especially Pope, had so long exercised was now disappearing. The fortunes and reputation of Pope form as curious and important a page in English literary history as the fortunes of Aristotle in the history of European thought. No poet was ever more clearly the outcome and the representative of the tendencies of his time. His path had been prepared by the French taste which came to England at the Restoration, turning the minds of men from the higher and wilder forms of imagination, producing a contempt for everything that was archaic, unsymmetrical, and inartistic, and making measure, and refinement, and exact and highly polished art the supreme ideals of taste. Shakespeare, as we have seen, was driven as a barbarian from the stage; Milton had few admirers and

[1] Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 383.
[2] Wilberforce's *Life*, i. 183.

no influence, while Dryden and Cowley were in their zenith. Addison was a fine critic, and in his admiration for Milton he was before his age; but his poem 'On the Greatest English Poets,' which was written in 1694—when Pope was but six years old—illustrates with a curious fidelity the tendencies of English criticism. Chaucer's 'unpolished strain' he describes as hopelessly rusted and obscured by time. Spenser's mystic tale amused a barbarous and uncultivated, but could have no charm for 'an understanding age.' Shakespeare is not even mentioned. Of Milton, it is true, he speaks in terms of high and worthy eulogy, but it was in Dryden that English poetry had culminated, though he seemed likely to have a worthy continuator in Congreve. And the grounds of this supreme admiration of Dryden were very characteristic. His were 'the sweetest numbers and the fittest words.' From his muse, 'no harsh, unartful numbers fell.'

Such requirements Pope exactly fulfilled. Probably no other poet had ever so perfectly realised the poetic ideal of his educated contemporaries, and for the long space of three-quarters of a century so absolutely formed, fixed, and satisfied their standard of taste. Then at length a new school of poetry sprang up, governed by other canons and aiming at other ideals. A generation arose who were much more sensible of his limitations than of his merits, and it became the literary fashion to describe him as not even a poet, or at best as only a poet of the lowest and most mechanical order.

Pope's poetry, indeed, bears to the poetry of the seventeenth century much the same relation as a Greek temple to a Gothic cathedral, and the limitations of his genius are very evident. He was essentially the poet of a town, the poet of a cultivated and artificial society. Though he wrote pastorals, few poets have had less genuine sense of natural beauty and less power of

accurately describing it. Though much of his poetry consists of descriptions of character, he seldom contemplated human nature except as refined and tempered by civilisation, and his judgments of men show no real subtlety or depth. Noble and beautiful as are the last hundred lines of his 'Eloisa' and the concluding passage of his 'Dunciad,' no sound critic would place him among the great poets either of passion or of imagination, and the form of the heroic verse which he adopted gave little scope for variety or delicacy of harmony. The crystalline perfection of his diction has, indeed, in its own form, never been surpassed. No instrument has ever been framed more admirably adapted to express vividly and accurately noble thoughts, to point by epigram the shaft of wit or to impress itself indelibly on the memories of men. Except Shakespeare, probably no English poet has left so many lines which have passed into the daily usage of his countrymen; and a rich and beautiful fancy, a noble sense of intellectual and moral beauty streams through his verse like the sunshine through a pellucid pane. In my own judgment, the exquisitely delicate fancy of the 'Rape of the Lock,' and the restrained and dignified pathos of the 'Lines to an Unfortunate Lady,' are among the choicest products of English poetry. The fashion of literature has changed, but many modern readers, fatigued with obscurity, and affectation, and paradox, and exaggeration, will gladly turn to a poet who never wrote a careless or an unmeaning line, who embodied in transparent verse so many noble thoughts and images and characters, and whose language, if it has not the Rembrandt-like depth of colouring of some of his successors, has at least all the severe and polished beauty of Greek sculpture. But the charm of his versification is more the charm of supremely perfect rhetoric than of music; and, like the century he represented, poetic sensibility and

imagination are in his poetry unduly subordinated to the reasoning power.

The balance between these elements has rarely been attained, and the ages and nations in which the imagination reigns most absolutely are not, I think, those which produce the truest poets. There is a state of mind, which is often seen in Celtic and in Oriental nations, where all the outlines of the real seem to fade away; where all thought is of the nature of dreaming; where strong, vague, poetic emotions form the staple of the feelings, and where the mind, habitually living in an atmosphere of the fantastic and unreal, loses all sense of the probabilities and hard realities of life. Such a soil commonly produces a rich efflorescence of legends, but it rarely produces poetry of the highest order. As gold cannot be worked without a certain admixture of alloy, so imagination is rarely converted into great poetry except by minds which have a large admixture of the elements of prose, a firm grasp of the realities of things, a strong sense of the practical and the human. Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe all possessed it most eminently. Their minds were essentially sane. Their measure of probability was sound, and they could write with a judgment and a precision, a distinctness and accuracy of outline, which no prose writer could have surpassed.

This perfect balance of the purely imaginative and the rational elements is only found in the greatest poets; and while Shelley has been the most illustrious modern example of the excessive predominance of the first, Pope and his school are examples of the equally excessive predominance of the second. But many years before the eighteenth century had terminated there were signs of a new tendency in poetry. It was plainly visible in the 'Seasons' of Thomson and in the 'Elegy' of Gray; it may be traced in some degree in

Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village' and in Crabbe's admirable pictures of rural life; and the whole of the poetry of Cowper was a revolt against the dominant school and an aspiration towards a wholly different ideal. A love of scenery, and especially of its grander forms, was evidently growing. There was an increasing appreciation of simple nature, of untutored emotions, of older, freer, and more artless poetry. The publication of the 'Reliques of Ancient Poetry' by Bishop Percy in 1765 profoundly affected English taste, and the revived sense of the beauties of ancient poetry was stimulated by 'Warton's History' and reflected in the forgeries of Chatterton and Macpherson. In spite of a few popular collections,[1] the wealth of poetry which lay entombed in the songs and ballads of Scotland was unknown to the English world till a Scotch peasant, formed by them and by the school of nature, became the greatest lyrical poet of his age. By a few strokes of genius Burns gave many of them an immortal form, and, as has been truly said, he did for the old songs of Scotland what Shakespeare had done for the English drama that preceded him.[2]

The eighteenth-century movement, of which Burns and Cowper were the most illustrious representatives, and which just before the close of the century produced the 'Lyrical Ballads,' advanced in spite of the influence of the great critic of the day. Johnson had no sense of natural beauty, which, indeed, he was too blind to see; he could discover little or nothing to admire in the ancient ballads, and his canons of taste and criticism were still essentially those of the age of Anne.[3] The

[1] See, on these collections, Shairp's *Aspects of Poetry*, pp. 203, 206, 207.

[2] I owe this remark to one who is not only a great poet, but also a most admirable critic—Alfred Tennyson.

[3] In that singularly interesting book—Twining's *Country Clergyman of the Eighteenth Century*

Shakespearian revival, however, assisted the change, and it was part of a movement which was much more than English. Herder collected the popular German songs. Lessing led a revolt against the classical standards of the age of Lewis XIV., and founded in Germany a school of criticism very like that which was afterwards founded in England by Coleridge. Under the influence of Rousseau and his disciple, Bernardin de St.-Pierre, what French writers call 'the sentiment of nature' acquired a new prominence in French literature. The descriptions of Swiss scenery in the 'Nouvelle Héloïse' gave an extraordinary impulse to the taste for natural beauty, and it is curiously illustrated by the fact that more than sixty accounts of travels in Switzerland were published between 1750 and 1795.[1] The literary influence of the French Revolution was in the same direction. Not only old governments and societies, but even the old dies in which European thought had been moulded, seemed broken. The empire of the artificial and the conventional was relaxed, and a new strain of passion was introduced into human affairs.

These remarks seem to have led us far from the social history of England in the eighteenth century; but habits of life and habits of thought are in truth

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—there is an estimate of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, written in 1784, which shows clearly that the critical age of Coleridge was drawing near. 'His poetry,' writes Twining—'I mean what he esteems such—is only good sense put in good metre. He sees no promise of Milton's genius in his juvenile poems. He feels no beauties in Mr. Gray's Odes. Did you ever see a more schoolboyish criticism than his upon Gray? What he says about blank verse I abominate. . . . In general, I find my palate in matters of poetry continually at variance with Dr. Johnson's. I don't mean this alone as any proof that he is wrong. But the general taste and feelings of the most poetical people, of the best poets, are against him. . . . He is a man of sense, and has an ear —that is all.' (P. 120.)

[1] Babeau, *Les Voyageurs en France*, p. 316.

indissolubly connected, and new facilities of travelling and an increased contact between town and country had, I believe, a real and a considerable part in the literary movement I have described. The increase of luxury and refinement which was so conspicuous among the country gentlemen was still more manifest in the industrial classes; but while in the upper classes the tendency was towards a greater assimilation of manners, in the middle classes it was rather to define and distinguish a variety of grades. There was already a rich merchant aristocracy who vied in splendour with the first nobility. Among tradesmen, the custom of apprentices living in the houses, mixing with the families, and serving at the tables of their masters, now began to pass away.[1] It was a change which was not without grave social and moral evils, and it corresponded to that greater division between the farmer and his labourer which has taken place in the present century. The migration of the rich shopkeeper from his shop, which we have seen in the first half of the century, had become more general. In the earlier years of George II. a thriving London tradesman not only lived in his shop, but rarely ventured more than once or twice in the summer beyond the sound of Bow bells, and then only to Edmonton or Hornsey. There was but one dish of meat upon his table. French or Spanish wines were never seen there except at Christmas. If he entertained a friend it was with elder or raisin wine made by his wife, and with a tankard of strong ale; his single maid-servant and his apprentice served, and when he at last retired from business it was usually to a small villa at Turnham Green, or Hackney, or Clapham Common.

In the country towns the habits were even more frugal. 'Formerly,' said Dr. Johnson in 1773, 'a good trades-

[1] See Wilberforce's *Life*, ii. 164.

man had no fire but in the kitchen; none in the parlour except on the Sunday. My father, who was a magistrate of Lichfield, lived thus. They never began to have a fire in the parlour but on leaving off business, or on some great revolution of their life.' But George III. had not been many years on the throne before these habits were totally changed. A successful tradesman had two houses. He left his shop as much as possible to his apprentices and his journeymen. He spent two or three months of every summer at Margate or Brighton. His wife and daughters imitated the dress, tastes, and pleasures of the gentry. A footman stood behind his table. He entertained his friends with Madeira and claret. Bloomsbury, Queen, and Bedford Squares, in the close neighbourhood of the still aristocratic quarter of Soho, were now filled with rich tradesmen, and shortly after the middle of the century it was noticed as a new and characteristic fact that private carriages belonging to tradesmen were becoming common.[1]

The same strain of ostentation ran through the humbler ranks of industry. Fielding attributed the great increase of robberies in his time largely to increased extravagance of dress, and there were loud complaints that apprentices and clerks were attempting to imitate all the fashions of the Maccaronies.[2]

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[1] Grose's *Olio*, pp. 24–29, 73. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (Croker's ed.), p. 283. See, too, some curious papers on the changes in the habits of tradesmen, *Annual Register*, 1766, pp. 205–207; 1767, p. 168; 1768, pp. 202, 203. *Letters on the present State of England* (1772), pp. 227, 228. There is a clever and amusing paper on tradesmen's villas, at the time when the fashion had just begun, and when a great simplicity of manners still survived, in the *Connoisseur*, No. 33 (1754).

[2] 'The majority of clerks,' said a writer in 1789, 'have not more than 50*l.* to find their board; shopmen 30*l.* and their board. Some few may have more, but when you see a servant with his hair elegantly dressed every day, silk or nankeen breeches, white silk stockings, change of buckles with every

These complaints of growing extravagance in the industrial classes were too common in the latter half of the eighteenth century not to rest on some real foundation. It was said that the old English frugality had departed, that a spirit of speculation had taken the place of the spirit of patient and prolonged industry, that the standard of commercial integrity and the high quality of English work were seriously lowered. Birmingham, about the middle of the century, had set up a manufacture of cheap guns, and it is stated that more than one hundred and fifty thousand were sent annually to the coast of Africa, where they were sold for five and sixpence apiece, and where at least half of them burst in the hand that fired them.[1] The assize of bread, fixing its price, was met by systematic adulteration. There were complaints of a similar adulteration of beer, brandy, and wine, and an especial Act of Parliament mentions and condemns the practice of selling sloe-leaves and ash-leaves for tea. Other Acts under George III. condemned frauds in the coal trade and in the manufacture of cordage for ships, and the frequent use of short measures in the textile manufactures. But perhaps the loudest complaints were of the exceeding badness of the new buildings. The rapid extension of London had so greatly raised the price of bricks that the makers had begun to mix with the brick, clay, ashes, and the slop of the streets; and the material of the bricks was so bad that London, it was said, without the intervention of an earthquake was threatened with the fate of Lisbon. There were constant instances of half-built houses falling before they could be finished, and it was related that the master of a ship which carried several thousand

fashion, out every evening at playhouses: . . when a master sees such an extravagance he can have no difficulty in drawing a just conclusion.' Wales's *My Grandfather's Pocket-book from* 1701–1796, p. 171.

[1] Shelburne's *Life*, i. 404.

bricks to Nova Scotia found on his arrival that more than half of them had crumbled into dust during the voyage.[1]

These evils were undoubtedly real, though they were certainly not peculiar to the latter half of the eighteenth century. They were evils such as always spring out of increased competition, increased industrial activity, increased facilities of rapidly acquiring wealth. In spite of a few calamities, the eighteenth century, till within eight years of its close, had been in England a period of singular and almost uninterrupted prosperity. In the reign of George II. the exports had almost doubled.[2] In the fourteen years between the accession of George III. and the beginning of the American troubles they again rose from 14,693,270*l.* to 17,128,029*l.*[3] Then came a great check, and as America had been the chief market for English goods, there were loud predictions of approaching industrial ruin. But within a year of the signature of peace the English exports to independent America exceeded those of the last years of the colonial period; and the first ten years of the Administration of Pitt were among the most prosperous England had ever known. In spite of increased debt and increased taxation, the exports rose to 24,900,000*l.* The tonnage of English vessels at least doubled.[4] The revenue in nearly all its branches proved elastic, and all the great manufacturing and commercial towns advanced with startling rapidity. The great and general rise of prices under George III. at once indicated and stimulated industrial prosperity, and the chief benefit naturally fell to the productive classes. Hume has left

[1] *The London Chronicle*, June 2–5, Aug. 2–4, 1764; *Letters on the present State of England*, pp. 240, 241; Pike's *Hist. of Crime*, ii. 397.

[2] Craik's *History of Commerce*, ii. 202.

[3] Ibid. ii. 202; iii. 67.

[4] Chalmers' *Estimate*, p. 147; Craik iii. 83–85.

the interesting remark that, in the twenty-eight years that elapsed between the writing of the sixth volume of his 'History' and the publication of the edition of 1786, prices in England had perhaps risen more than in the preceding 150 years.[1] In a pamphlet published in 1779 it was noticed as a characteristic feature of the time, that the papers were now full of accounts of tallow-chandlers, grocers, and other tradesmen leaving fortunes of 20,000*l.* or 30,000*l.*[2] The same energy which showed itself in reckless and distempered speculation showed itself also in commercial enterprise; the discoveries of Captain Cook extended the horizon of the world, and in New Zealand and Australia he founded colonies which already contain a far larger English population than the American colonies at the time of their separation, and which seem likely to play a great and most beneficent part in the history of mankind.

In agriculture the period we are considering was marked by improvements which added largely to the productiveness of the soil, but they were improvements which for the most part were not favourable to the small farmer, for they required an amount of capital and skill which he did not possess. The system of drill husbandry and a greatly improved system of rotation of crops were introduced by Jethro Tull in the first half of the century, and though like many other eminent benefactors of mankind he died half ruined and unappreciated, the methods which he taught spread widely after his death. The cultivation of field turnips, though not absolutely new, was immensely extended, chiefly through the efforts of Lord Townshend, the old colleague and rival of Walpole, whose great farming ex-

[1] Hume's *History*, vi. 177.

[2] *Comparative Burdens of Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 23.

periments in Norfolk shortly after the middle of the century contributed very materially to the advance of British agriculture. Several other kinds of field cultivation were about the same time introduced or extended. The use of lime in preparing the ground became common. A number of ingenious agricultural instruments were invented, and a new and improved system of drainage was introduced by Elkington. But great as were the improvements in arable farming, they were surpassed by those which were effected in the improvement of sheep and cattle. It was about 1755 that Bakewell began his experiments with this object. He travelled over much of the Continent for the purpose of studying the different breeds, and he soon perceived that by judicious crossing it was possible to raise the breeds in England to a perfection hitherto unknown. Several great landlords and farmers in England and Scotland perceived at once the value of the discovery, and in the last half of the century the breed of animals in England was probably more improved than in all the recorded centuries that preceded it. Merino sheep were about the same time introduced, apparently by the King himself.

There is a remarkable passage in Arthur Young's 'Tour in France' which shows clearly the relation of the discoveries I have enumerated to the consolidation of farms. He is speaking of the smallness of French farms as compared with English ones, of the great inferiority of French farm cultivation, and of the manifest connection between these two facts. 'Where,' he asks, 'is the little farmer to be found who will cover his whole farm with marl at the rate of 100 to 150 tons per acre? who will drain all his land at the expense of 2*l.* or 3*l.* per acre? . . . who to improve the breed of his sheep will give 1,000 guineas for the use of a single ram for a single season? . . . who will send across the

kingdom to distant provinces for new implements and for men to use them? who will employ and pay men for residing in provinces where practices are found which they want to introduce into their farms? At the very mention of such exertions common in England, what mind can be so perversely framed as to imagine for a single moment that such things are to be effected by little farmers? Deduct from agriculture all the practices that have made it flourishing in this island, and you have precisely the management of small farms.'

It is impossible, indeed, to consider the history of English agriculture in the last century without arriving at the conclusion that its peculiar excellence and type sprang mainly from the fact that the ownership and control of land were chiefly in the hands of a wealthy and not of a needy class; and a large number of great gentlemen farmers led the way in all the paths of progress that have been described. Another influence, however, of a much less beneficial character, which was tending to the extinction of small farms, grew out of the sudden extension of manufactures. The domestic manufactures, which had hitherto formed an important element in the life and resources of a small farmer, suddenly ceased. Before this time not only the implements of culture and articles of dress required in a farmer's house were made at home, but also in many parts of England the wives and daughters of small farmers were habitually employed in spinning, weaving, and manufacturing a great variety of articles for the London market. In its moral effects such a system of manufacture was immensely preferable to that of the crowded manufactory, while economically it had the great advantage of enabling a farming class to exist in comfort on farms which could never support them by agricultural produce alone. It had the advantage also of furnishing employment for the periods of the year

when agricultural labour is very slack, for the infirm members of the family, for delicate women, for old men who were too weak to labour in the fields. But the inventions of Arkwright, Hargreaves, and Crompton destroyed this resource. Manufactures were concentrated in great centres, and the articles which had once been produced by manual dexterity were now produced in such quantities and with such cheapness by machinery that all other modes of producing them ceased. This was, I believe, one of the most serious of the many serious evils that have accompanied and qualified the great benefits which manufacturing progress has produced.

In this manner, by irresistible economical causes which were independent of, and stronger than, any legislation, the small farmers were gradually turned into wage-earning labourers. The improvements in husbandry and the improvements in manufactures were alike incompatible with the old system, and the balance of profits was now clearly on the side of large farms. Arthur Young calculated in 1768 that the average size over the greater part of England was then slightly under 300 acres,[1] and the tendency was undoubtedly in the direction of still further consolidation. He did not in any way regret it. The nett produce of the soil was largely increased. He contended with great force, that through the increased demand for labour enlarged farms supported a greater population than small ones;[2] that in every district where agriculture and

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[1] *Northern Tour*, iv. 192–202.

[2] 'The single circumstance,' he says, 'of much of the labour of small farms being servants unmarried, and nine-tenths of that of great ones labourers married, makes a great difference;' and the large farmers, he adds, almost invariably expend more labour than the small ones, in proportion to their acres. Young's *Political Arithmetic*, pp. 294, 295.

manufactures were combined, the quality of husbandry was below the average; and that the position of the English agricultural labourer was incontestably superior to that of the small tenant on the Continent. Yet, when all this is admitted, the sudden destruction of one of the chief means of livelihood of countless families could not have been effected without much suffering, and there could have been no immediate increase of wages sufficient to compensate for it. A vast displacement of industries took place, and a change of conditions, which uprooted a great part of the agricultural population from the soil, brought with it grave moral evils and created divisions and antagonisms of interest which may prove very dangerous in the future. A long series of unusually bad harvests, shortly after the middle of the century, aggravated the transition, and it was soon found that restraints on marriage act much less powerfully on simple labourers than on occupiers of the soil.[1]

Another important feature in the agricultural condition of England in the latter half of the century was that it ceased to be a wheat-exporting country. The English corn laws had already passed through several phases. The older policy of the country was to prohibit absolutely the exportation of corn, but with the increased production of agriculture and the increased power of the agricultural interest, this policy was abandoned at the end of the fourteenth century; and after more than one violent fluctuation, a law of Charles II. established a system which was in force at the Revolution. Under this law free exportation was permitted as long as the home price did not exceed

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[1] See a striking passage on the difference in Young's *Northern Tour*, iv. 248. See, too, Kay's *Social Condition of the People*, i. 360.

fifty-three shillings and fourpence a quarter; while importation was restrained by prohibitory duties until that price was attained in the home market, and by a heavy duty of eight shillings in the quarter when the home price ranged between fifty-three shillings and fourpence and eighty shillings. At the Revolution, however, a new policy was adopted. The duties on importation were unchanged, while exportation was not only permitted but encouraged by a bounty of five shillings in the quarter as long as the home price did not exceed forty-eight shillings. It was the firm conviction of the statesmen of this period that, husbandry being the necessary and main industry of the greater part of the English people, and the foundation on which the whole system of political power in England is based, its encouragement should be a capital object of legislation, and that it was also a matter of the utmost political moment that the island should be self-supporting, independent of all other nations for the necessaries of life. The new subsidy to the landed interest, it was urged, would inevitably give a great impulse to tillage, and by making it possible to cultivate with profit a larger area of land would make the home price of wheat both steadier and lower. When the farmer cultivated only for the home market, he was naturally tempted to understock his farm through fear that his produce might be left on his hands, and if the harvest fell but a little below the average, there was an immediate scarcity. But with the prospect of a large and profitable foreign market, more corn would be produced and fluctuations in price would be less rapid. In periods of great scarcity, however, temporary Acts were passed prohibiting for a short time the exportation, and suspending the duties on imported corn.

This legislation has been the subject of one of those great revolutions of opinion which must always impress

upon a judicious student a deep sense of the fallibility of political reasonings. During the greater part of the eighteenth century its wisdom appears to have been perfectly unquestioned, and it was accepted and maintained by statesmen of every party. Arthur Young has devoted a considerable space to the subject of the corn laws, and he considers the English law one of the highest examples of political wisdom. The system of an absolutely free corn trade, which prevailed in Holland, would, he maintained, be ruinous in a country which depended mainly on its agriculture. The system of forbidding all exportation of corn, which prevailed in Spain, Portugal, and many parts of Italy, and during the greater part of the century in France, was altogether incompatible with a flourishing corn husbandry. Prices would be too fluctuating—in some years so low that the farmers would be ruined, in others so high that the people would be starved. It had been 'the singular felicity' of this country to have devised a plan which accomplished the strange paradox of at once lowering the price of corn and encouraging agriculture. 'This was one of the most remarkable strokes of policy, and the most contrary to the general ideas of all Europe, of any that ever were carried into execution;' and 'it cannot be doubted,' he said, 'that this system of exporting with a bounty has been of infinite national importance.'[1] Burke declared that experience, the most unerring of guides, had amply proved the value of the corn bounty as a means of supplying the English people with cheap bread;[2] and Malthus defended it

[1] Arthur Young's *Political Arithmetic*, pp. 27–34, 193, 276. It is remarkable that in this book, which was published in 1774, Young dwells upon the great probability of American corn being brought over to England at a price with which it would be impossible for the English farmers to compete. See pp. 279–281.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xvii. 480.

against the strictures of Adam Smith, and maintained that it had proved an inestimable benefit to the labouring poor.[1] Modern economists, on the other hand, are accustomed entirely to condemn it. They describe it as one of the worst instances of a class employing their legislative power to subsidise themselves at the expense of the community, and they have altogether refused to attribute to the corn bounties the remarkable and undoubted fact, that in spite of the increase of population the price of corn was from fifteen to twenty per cent. cheaper during the seventy years that followed the law of 1689 than it had been during the forty years that preceded it.[2] I have quoted in a former volume several statistics about the price of wheat. It will here be sufficient to repeat that its average during the first sixty years of the eighteenth century was but a fraction above forty shillings a quarter, and that during the forty years which preceded 1750 it sank as low as one pound sixteen shillings without being accompanied by any corresponding fall in wages.[3]

Shortly after the Peace of 1763, however, there were evident signs that population was beginning to press upon the means of subsistence. The export of corn diminished; the price rose, and several temporary Acts were passed to relieve the scarcity. Something, no doubt, was due to a succession of bad harvests, and something to the spread of pasture in consequence of the discoveries of Bakewell; but the main cause appears to have been the rapid growth of the population in the manufacturing centres. In the decade from 1770 to 1780 the imports and exports of wheat for the

[1] *On Population*, bk. iii. c. x.

[2] Craik's *Hist. of Commerce*, ii. 145–147.

[3] See the tables in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, bk. i. ii.; Malthus, bk. iii. c. x.; and also a great many facts on the subject in Young's *Political Arithmetic*.

first time almost balanced each other, and after 1790 England ceased to be an exporting country.[1]

The changing conditions of English agriculture were met by the Act of 1773—an Act which has been described as the most liberal English corn law before 1846. It admitted foreign wheat at the almost nominal duty of sixpence a quarter as soon as the home price had risen to forty-eight shillings a quarter, and rye, peas, beans, barley, and oats on terms which were equally easy. It maintained the old bounty of five shillings a quarter on exported wheat, but it made both that bounty and the liberty of exportation cease when the home price was forty-four shillings. The system of bounties on exportation was extended to oats, peas, and beans; but, as in the case of barley and wheat, the exportation was forbidden after the home price had risen to a defined and moderate level. The object of the Legislature was to prevent those violent fluctuations of price which had been frequent before the Act of 1689; and it was believed that, in consequence of these measures, wheat would not fluctuate greatly beyond the limits of forty-four and forty-eight shillings a quarter, and that the price of other grain would be equally steady.[2]

Great efforts were at the same time made to bring a larger part of England under cultivation, and enclosure bills multiplied with a wonderful rapidity. An immense proportion of England at this time was still waste, or was held in common and very slightly cultivated. By the law of England the soil of common land belonged usually to the lord of the manor, but the surrounding freeholders had certain defined rights upon it. They were of different kinds—rights of pasture, which

[1] See Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 147.
[2] *Wealth of Nations*, bk. iv. c. v.

were often let out at a penny an acre,[1] rights of cutting wood and turf, and also rights of cultivation. In England, wrote in 1723 an author who was very conversant with agricultural matters, 'every parish has three large common fields for corn belonging to it (besides the common for pasture), wherein every freeholder has his share—one six acres, another four, another eight or ten, according to his substance—not lying contiguous in each field, but perhaps in two or three places, according to the quality of the land. Two of these fields are continually under corn—namely, one for the winter corn and the other for the summer.'[2] When the crop was on the ground it belonged exclusively to the person to whom it had been granted, but when the crop was secured the land reverted to commonage among all the persons who had grants of land in such common fields.[3]

The cultivation of these lands appears to have been the worst, the most wasteful, and the most exhausting in England. The pasture land was usually of a wretched description, and often enormously overstocked. Nothing was done for it in the way of draining or manure, and the greater part of common land appears to have been perfectly uncultivated and almost wholly unproductive. It has been estimated, probably without any exaggeration, that the enclosure and separate cultivation of the

[1] Report of the Committee on Waste Lands in 1795.

[2] *Considerations for Promoting Agriculture*, by R. L. V. N. (Lord Molesworth), p. 19. The fullest account I have seen of the manner in which common fields were managed is in a pamphlet called *Suggestions for rendering the Enclosure of Common Fields a Source of Population and Riches*, by Thomas Stone, land surveyor (1787). There is a curious description of the way in which these fields were allotted, in the evidence of Mr. Blamire, in the Report of the Committee on Commons Enclosure in 1844, p. 27.

[3] See Sir J. Sinclair's Report of the Committee of the House of Commons on Waste Lands in 1795.

common lands must have increased their produce at least fivefold.[1] It is not true that these lands were public property. The rights that have been described belonged to the surrounding freeholders in defined and recognised proportions, or were conveyed to tenants in the leases of their farms. There were claims, however, of an uncertain and vague character, resting on long prescription; there were numerous squatters who had settled on these great wastes without any legal rights, and who obtained from them a scanty and precarious livelihood; and a large vagrant population of gipsies, tramps, poachers, smugglers, and nomadic mendicants found them an important element in their existence.

There were some Acts of Parliament under George II. for enabling the lord of the manor, with the assent of the majority of the commoners, to enclose portions of waste land for the purpose of planting for the benefit of the commoners; and in 1773 a general Act was passed 'for the better cultivation, improvement, and regulation of the common arable fields, wastes, and commons of pasture in this kingdom.' It provided that, with the assent of three-fourths of the commoners, tillage and arable lands lying in open and common fields might be fenced in and managed in concert under the direction of a field master or field reeve, and that any lord of the manor might, with the consent of three-fourths of the commoners, lease, for a time not exceeding four years, a twelfth part of the common, applying the rent to draining and fencing the remainder. The rights of all cottagers were scrupulously protected, and in cases where they were affected by the provisions of the law, full compensation was to be granted.[2]

The transformation of common land into private

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[1] M'Culloch's *Account of the British Empire*, i. 580.

[2] 29 George II. c. 36; 31 ibid. c. 41; 13 George III. c. 81.

property was, however, as yet effected only by private Acts of Parliament, and these Acts multiplied in the latter half of the century with extraordinary rapidity. Under Anne there had been only two Acts of Enclosure, comprising 1,439 acres; under George I. there were sixteen, comprising 17,660 acres; under George II. there were 226, comprising 318,778 acres; but from the accession of George III. to the end of the year 1796 no less than 1,532 Enclosure Acts were passed, including 2,804,197 acres.

In the Report of a Committee of the House of Commons in 1797, it was estimated that there were still 7,800,000 acres of waste land or common fields. The whole subject was considered by Committees of the House of Commons in 1795, 1797, and 1800, and on each occasion Sir John Sinclair drew up a valuable report, which, together with much evidence about the existing condition of these lands, clearly indicates the disposition and intentions of the Legislature. It was contended that it was of the utmost importance that this vast neglected portion of the English soil should be brought into speedy cultivation, and added to the national resources. It was a great evil that England should rely for her supply of corn on foreign importation. Since she had been compelled to do so, its price had become much higher, and had been subject to much greater fluctuations, and a serious element of uncertainty had thus been introduced into the relations between landlords and tenants. The enclosures, it was urged, were of the utmost value to the poor. They were for their benefit, for they contributed to furnish a cheap and abundant supply of corn; and they were also for their benefit because, by adding enormously to the demand for agricultural labour, they raised the rate of wages. There were also many minor and subsidiary advantages. The enclosures made the

country much more defensible in the event of an invasion. They improved the climate and health of the inhabitants, which suffered severely from the vast tracts of undrained land. They mitigated the burden of the tithes, as in the Enclosure Acts the lay and spiritual owners of tithes generally acquiesced in receiving a portion of land instead of their right to tithes.[1] They added greatly to the good order and security of the community by enclosing wastes which were the especial resorts and refuges of highwaymen and footpads, and of all the idlest and most disorderly elements of society.

The change was an inevitable one. With the famine prices of the great French war it advanced with gigantic strides, and it is impossible reasonably to question that it was a vast benefit to the community. 'Without enclosures,' Arthur Young emphatically said, 'there can be no good husbandry;' and he has shown how, under their influence, great tracts which had once been inhabited only by a wretched and thinly scattered population sunk in poverty, idleness, and crime, had become the fertile and prosperous home of thriving industry.[2] Young was before all things a farmer, and he may be suspected of some bias towards the landed interest; but such a bias will hardly be attributed to Bentham. Yet the patriarch of the philosophical Radicals is at least equally enthusiastic. He describes the division of common lands as 'one of the greatest and best understood improvements' of the age. 'When we pass over the lands which have undergone this happy change,' he writes, 'we are enchanted as with the appearance of a new colony. Harvests, flocks, and

[1] See Bishop Watson's *Anecdotes of His Own Life*, ii. 60.

[2] There are many passages relating to enclosures scattered through Young's *Tours*, but he has treated the subject most fully and elaborately in his *Political Arithmetic*. In this treatise he answers at length Price's arguments against enclosures.

smiling habitations have succeeded to the sadness and sterility of the desert. Happy conquests of peaceful industry! noble aggrandisements, which inspire no alarms and provoke no enemies!' The enclosures he emphatically declared to be alike favourable to the interests of rich and poor. They augmented the wealth of the former, but they at the same time with equal certainty raised the wages of labour in the very quarter where those wages had hitherto been most miserably inadequate.[1]

It was impossible, however, that such a change could have been accomplished without producing some opposition and without inflicting some serious suffering. Among the eccentricities of opinion of Dr. Price was a conviction that the population of England had been declining since the Revolution, and he denounced enclosures as one great cause of depopulation. Multitudes of poor men who, without any legal right, had found a home upon the common land, were driven away homeless and without compensation. Except by occasional riots they had no means of striking the attention of the world, and their sufferings would probably have found no expression in literature had not a poet of exquisite and tender genius described them in one of the most admirable poems of the eighteenth century.[2] The position of the many small freeholders and leaseholders who had legal rights in the common land was different. The Enclosure Bills carefully provided that every legal right should be ascertained and compen-

[1] Bentham's *Works*, i. 342; viii. 449.

[2] 'Where then, ah! where, shall poverty reside,
To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride?
If to some common's fenceless limits strayed,
He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
And e'en the bare worn common is denied.'
Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*.

sated, and there is, I believe, no reason to doubt that in general the commissioners honestly endeavoured to carry this purpose into effect. The compensations were sometimes made in the form of money and sometimes by the allotment to each commoner of a portion of the divided land. The expense, however, of a private Act of Parliament, even when it was absolutely uncontested, commonly amounted to sums ranging from 180*l.* to 300*l.*, and sometimes to much larger sums. Much the larger part of the lands fell to the lord of the manor. In the case of small enclosures, rapacious country attorneys, surveyors, and parliamentary fees often swallowed up all, or nearly all, the proportion of compensation which the poor man should have received for the loss of his common rights. The interests of future generations of labourers were almost wholly neglected. There were complaints of the absolute power, and sometimes of the partiality, of the commissioners; and it was said—no doubt with much truth—that where doubtful, intricate, and conflicting interests were in presence, where the terms of leases had to be altered and new adjustments of rent to be made, the poor man who could not fee counsel or convey witnesses contended at a most unfair disadvantage with his wealthy neighbour.[1]

The excessive legal expense of the enclosures, which was a serious and undoubted evil, was partly remedied by the Enclosure Acts of 1801 and 1845; though no change in landed property which passes through the hands of English lawyers has ever yet been cheaply effected. The example of Frederick the Great, who for twenty years before 1783 is said to have expended out

[1] Much information on these subjects will be found in the Reports of the Parliamentary Committees in 1795, 1797, 1800, and 1844; in the Debates upon the Commons Act of 1845; in a work called *Six Essays on Commons Preservation* (1867); and in Mr. Cunningham's *Politics and Economics*, pp. 208–216.

of his very moderate revenue not less than 300,000*l.* a year in encouraging, by premiums and in other ways, the reclamation and cultivation of land in Prussia, was held up as an example;[1] and the permanent advantages to all classes of Englishmen of the great enclosures of the latter half of the eighteenth century and of the early years of the nineteenth century have been very great. The movement, however, contributed powerfully to that consolidation of farms and that conversion of small tenants into agricultural labourers which the introduction of more expensive farming, and the extinction of domestic industries, had already begun. Some small farms were at once turned into large ones by enclosing considerable tracts of common land, and numerous little farmers, who had been just able to subsist with the assistance of free pasture, now found their position untenable. Money compensation was soon spent or divided; the little farm was thrown up and absorbed into its larger neighbour, and the farmer himself became an agricultural labourer.

In a country like England, where farming is carried on upon scientific principles, with a large expenditure of capital and with proportionally large returns, this transformation appears to me to have been absolutely inevitable. From the time when the domestic manufactures were destroyed by the factory system, and when the commons were for the most part enclosed, the economical causes became irresistible. At the same time the change is not one to be looked upon with enthusiasm. In comparing the lot of a day-labourer in a prosperous country with that of a small farmer or peasant proprietor, it will usually be found that the annual earnings of the former are larger than those of

[1] Sinclair, Report of the Committee of the House of Commons, 1797.

the latter; that his food is better and more abundant; that his daily labour is less excessive; that he is free from the burden of debt which weighs so heavily on the peasant proprietors of the Continent; that he possesses, since the law of settlement has been relaxed, a much larger amount of real independence. On the other hand, in some of the most important moral respects his condition is far inferior. The possession of land, or the hope of gradually attaining it, is found by experience to be one of the strongest of all incentives to providence, industry, and self-restraint; and in the poorest classes these qualities hold an especially prominent place among the springs of character and in the hierarchy of virtues. Probably no other class in English life can hope for so little from their exercise as the agricultural labourer. Probably no other class lead a life so purely animal, look forward so little to the future, are so completely dissociated from national interests, or yield so readily to the temptations of the public-house. The possession of a little garden brings with it a whole train of tastes and habits to which the modern labourer is a stranger.[1] Gross ignorance, reckless multiplication, and a deplorably low standard of comfort and decency long characterised very generally the agricultural labourers of England. The improvidence created by parish relief, the extreme imperfection of country education, and the overcrowding of dwellings, created partly by the difficulty of obtaining cottages and partly by their own miserable standard of

[1] This fact was not unrecognised in the eighteenth century. Eden noticed that in parts of Leicestershire 'most of the poor have little gardens, in which they chiefly cultivate potatoes. Gardens are found to be great incitements to industry, and accordingly in some parishes the poor have four or five acres each, assigned them for a garden at a very moderate rent. This supplies them with cheese, butter, and milk at an easy rate.' Eden's *History of the Poor*, i. 569.

comfort, aggravated the situation, and the detailed inquiries that were made into the condition of agricultural labourers between 1840 and 1850 revealed a social condition which was disgraceful to civilisation.[1] Much has since been done to improve it, and in some parts of England it has been very materially changed; but the condition of the agricultural labourer is still a phase of English life on which no patriot can look with pleasure, and the sharp contrasts of interest or sentiment which divide the farmer from the labourer may constitute a grave political danger to the Empire.

The increase of population in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century appears to have been very rapid. According to the most careful computation, the population of England and Wales in 1700 was about 5,134,561; in 1750, 6,039,684; in 1801, 9,172,980.[2] The immense acceleration of the rate of progress in the second half of the century was mainly in the towns, and was due to the growth of manufactures and commerce, and it was the leading cause of the multiplication of enclosures. The English poor law, compelling every parish to support its paupers, did undoubtedly encourage reckless and improvident marriages, but it had on the other hand a strong repressive influence on the agricultural population by making it the plain interest of every landlord to discourage cottages or small farms

[1] A terrible array of facts illustrating this truth will be found in Kay's *Social Condition of the People*, i. 472–579. See, too, *England as It is*, by William Johnston, c. xxx. (1851), a book which appears to me to contain a great deal of valuable, though very unpalatable truth. See, too, an essay on 'The Domestic Economy of the Labouring Classes,' in Walker's *The Original*, pp. 199–218.

[2] This was the calculation made by Mr. Finlayson. M'Culloch's *Account of the British Empire*, art. 'Population.' The census of 1801 (the first made) reckoned the population of England and Wales at 8,872,980, exclusive of the soldiers and sailors; these amounted to 470,598 for the United Kingdom.

which might shelter families likely some day to fall upon the rates. The law of Elizabeth requiring every cottage to be connected with four acres of land appears to have become obsolete for a considerable time before its repeal in 1775; and it is probable that the appalling condition of overcrowding, indecency, and sanitary neglect in the labourers' cottages which was disclosed by the Parliamentary Commission of 1842 existed to a large extent before the close of the eighteenth century. Unmarried labourers, it is true, still lived very generally with the farmers, but there were already loud complaints of the extreme difficulty which the poor found in procuring habitations. Labourers, it was said, who wished to migrate from their parents, were sometimes refused permission from the lord of the manor to build a cottage on the common. They could neither obtain tenements, nor small plots to build upon, and they sometimes availed themselves of a long winter night to raise a hovel on the roadside or on the common.[1]

The difficulty was naturally aggravated when the commons were enclosed; but whether on the whole the direct and immediate effect of enclosures was to diminish the agricultural population, has been a matter of much controversy. The most probable opinion seems to be that, by increasing employment and production, they on the whole rather stimulated it.[2] But great displace-

[1] Eden's *Hist. of the Poor*, i. 361. 'Cottages,' says Arthur Young, 'are in general the habitations of labourers, who all swarm with children; many have double, treble, and even quadruple families.' *Northern Tour*, iv. 415. On the powerful influence of the Poor Law in inducing both landlords and farmers to forbid the erection of labourers' cottages, see Young's *Political Arithmetic*, pp. 93–95.

[2] This subject is especially treated in an able pamphlet by the Rev. J. Howlett (1786), who examined in detail the fluctuations of population in many different parishes. There is a curious collection of contemporary pamphlets on enclosures written from different points of view, in the

ments occurred. Districts once covered with small arable farms were turned into immense pastures, and there were complaints that a single man monopolised a tract which had formerly supported twelve or fourteen industrious families.[1] Whole villages which had depended on free pasture land and fuel, dwindled and perished, and a stream of emigrants passed to America. Macaulay, in an essay which is by no means among the most valuable of his productions, has censured Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village' as wholly unnatural and incongruous. The village, he says, in its happy state could only have existed in England; the village in its deserted state could only have existed in Ireland. But there are contemporary pictures of the effects of enclosures in England which go far to refute the criticism.[2]

The increase of corn produced by the enclosures for a time checked the importations, but there were many deficient harvests; prices were on an average considerably higher than in the first half of the century;[3] there

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British Museum, bound up with those of Mr. Howlett; I have derived much assistance from them. Arthur Young considered enclosures one of the best means of promoting population. 'Provide new employment,' he said, 'and new hands will inevitably follow; an Act of Parliament to raise money for the improvement of a million of waste acres would increase population more than twenty score of naturalisation bills.' *Northern Tour*, iv. 414.

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxii. 237.

[2] Thus, in a pamphlet published in 1786, the writer complains that 'the landowner converts twenty small farms into about four large ones, and at the same time the tenants of those large farms are tied down in their leases not to plough any of the premises so let to farm, by which means, [of] several hundred villages that forty years ago contained between 400 and 500 inhabitants, very few will now be found to exceed eighty and some not half that number; nay, some contain only one poor, old, decrepit man or woman hired by the occupiers of the land. . . . The young and healthy have dispersed themselves; those that could pay their passage, having transported themselves to America.' *Cursory Remarks on Enclosures by a Country Farmer*, pp. 2–5.

[3] See a table of the exports and imports for several years

was much fluctuation in the corn trade, and several temporary measures were taken. The Corn Law of 1791 was adjusted to the higher level of prices, and was somewhat less liberal than that of 1773. The importation of wheat was prevented by prohibitory duties till the home price was fifty shillings. It was only subject to a duty of sixpence a quarter when the home price was fifty-four shillings. It was subject to a duty of two shillings and sixpence when the home price ranged between these two figures. Exportation was absolutely forbidden when the home price was higher than forty-six shillings, and encouraged by a bounty up to forty-four shillings, and corresponding measures were taken to regulate the trade in other grain.

But, in spite of the enclosures, the home supply soon became inadequate to the wants of the country, and the last years of the century were among the worst England had ever known. The distress produced by increasing pressure of population on means of subsistence, and by great displacements and revolutions of industry, was aggravated by a terrible period of commercial crisis and depression, a succession of extremely bad harvests and a great French war. The price of the necessaries of life rose out of all proportion to the rate of wages,[1] and fluctuated with a violence that was extremely disastrous to the labouring poor. At the close of the summer of 1795 wheat was sold at the enormous price of six guineas a quarter. In 1796 it was at one time one hundred and twenty-two shillings—at another fifty-six shillings, and in the last year of the century it again rose to ninety-two shillings

after 1771. Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 674–676. See, too, Malthus *On Population*, c. x.

[1] Several valuable statistics illustrating the relation between wages and the price of food at this time, will be found in Eden's *History of the Poor*, i. 383–386.

and seven pence a quarter.[1] The poor rate, which at the beginning of the century was probably less than a million a year, was about two millions at the close of the American war, but rose to four millions before the end of the century.[2]

All the evidence we possess concurs in showing that during the first three-quarters of the century the position of the poorer agricultural classes in England was singularly favourable. The price of wheat was both low and steady. Wages, if they advanced slowly, appear to have commanded an increased proportion of the necessaries of life, and there were all the signs of growing material well-being. It was noticed that wheat bread, and that made of the finest flour, which at the beginning of the period had been confined to the upper and middle classes, had become before the close of it over the greater part of England the universal food, and that the consumption of cheese and butter in proportion to the population in many districts almost trebled. The use of tea had immensely extended, and potatoes, turnips, carrots, and cabbages, which in the early years of the century had been only raised by the spade, were now commonly raised by the plough, and entered largely into the habitual food of the working classes. Beef and mutton were eaten almost daily in villages where their use had before been hardly known, or where at most they had been eaten only once a week, and the immense consumption of animal food by the

[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 452. There is some discrepancy about the accounts of the average. Compare Eden's *History of the Poor*, app. lxxviii. Broderick's *English Land and English Landlords*, app. v. Thorold Rogers's *Six Centuries of Wages and Prices*. According to Mr. Nicholls, the average price of a quarter of wheat between 1785 and 1794 was about forty-nine shillings and ninepence, and between 1795 and 1801 eighty-seven shillings.

[2] Broderick, p. 218. Nicholls's *History of the Poor Law*, i. 406.

mass of the population was one of the features that most distinguished England from the Continent.[1]

During the next few years it is probable that the increase of wages was on the whole not equivalent to the increased price of the chief articles of first necessity.[2] The question, however, is extremely obscure and difficult, and it should be treated with great diffidence. Tolerably complete statistics of prices have been collected; but it is, I believe, impossible to determine with real accuracy the rate of wages. In addition to the great variations in different districts, and in winter, summer, and harvest time, it would be necessary to know what proportion of his time the labourer was unemployed; and a new and serious element of difficulty

[1] Dr. Price even maintained that 'it is the superior price of flesh that hurts the poor, as it forces them to consume bread only, consequently they could live better when wheat was high than they can now while it is comparatively low.' Young dissents from this opinion; but he says: 'In France, where bread, I apprehend, forms nineteen parts in twenty of the food of the people, corn, and especially wheat, is the only great object of cultivation, vines answering to our barley. In England, on the contrary, the quantity of meat, butter, and cheese, consumed by all ranks of the people is immense—to a much greater value, I should suppose, than that of wheat, hence cattle to our farmers is an object as important as corn.' Young's *Political Arithmetic*, pp. 133, 158. See, too, the emphatic testimony of Sir J. Stewart, *Enquiry into the Principles of Political Economy* (1767), bk. i. c. xviii., to the extent to which the English people lived on pork, beef, and mutton; the remarks of Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, bk. i. c. viii.; the review of the condition of the working classes in a pamphlet by the Rev. J. Howlett, called *Enclosures a Cause of Improved Agriculture* (1787), p. 98; the detailed comparison in Arthur Young's *Tour in France*, between the conditions of the English and French labourers; and the conclusion arrived at by a recent parliamentary inquiry, quoted by Mr. Broderick, *English Land and English Landlords*, p. 215. See, too, the evidence I have myself collected, vol. ii. pp. 203–211.

[2] This was the opinion of the commissioner who reported on the employment of women and children in 1868 (first report). See, too, Kebbel, *The Agricultural Labourer*, pp. 40, 41. Eden's *History of the Poor*, i. 383–385.

is introduced by the fact that the custom of working by the piece had become recently very general in most parts of England.[1] But whatever doubt there may be about the condition of the labourers in the period between the American war and the war of the French Revolution, there can be no doubt that about 1792 it began most seriously to deteriorate. The resources derived from domestic manufactures and from commons had greatly diminished, and the enormous rise of prices had begun. Cries of distress were loud and poignant. There were several parliamentary inquiries into the causes of the high price of food and the increasing destitution of large sections of the people, and many remedies were suggested.

One proposal, which received the approbation of Dr. Price, and which bears a strong resemblance to schemes that are acquiring great prominence in our own day, was a gigantic system of State insurance, to which the whole population were to be obliged to subscribe in different proportions.[2] Friendly societies, to which labourers subscribed a certain portion of their earnings, and which secured them subsistence in sickness, and independence in old age, multiplied greatly over most parts of England. They were encouraged by the Legislature, but especially by agricultural societies, which often assisted them with premiums. Schools of industry were established. There were agreements among members of Parliament and other wealthy persons to diminish the consumption of wheat bread in their households. Great changes were introduced into the workhouse system. An Act was passed to relieve the families of men serving in the militia. Another Act, preventing the

[1] Eden's *History of the Poor*, i. 604. See also, on the great difficulty of ascertaining wages, p. 385.

[2] See the details of his scheme, which was proposed by a Mr. Acland. Eden, i. 373, 374.

removal of poor persons until they had become actually chargeable upon the rates, abolished a mischievous and oppressive portion of the law of settlement which prevented the labourers from moving freely in search of employment; and relaxations were introduced into the poor law system which proved ultimately extremely disastrous. The system of regulating the rate of wages in each district by justices was very ancient, but it was in the last quarter of the century that the system of paying certain portions of those wages out of the rates came into use. The Act of 1723, which restricted parish relief to occupants of workhouses, was modified; outdoor relief was in some cases permitted; and, with the warm approbation of Pitt,[1] parochial relief was made proportionate to the number of children in a family, and a direct premium was thus offered to improvident marriages. As early as 1803, it appears from official returns that, out of a population of about 8,870,000 in England and Wales, not less than 1,234,000 persons, or nearly a seventh part, were partakers of parochial relief.[2] It was probably not till at least forty years of the nineteenth century had passed, that the condition of English agricultural labourers began again seriously to improve.

The history of agriculture in the eighteenth century is on the whole a history of great progress, but the changes which were effected in this sphere were inconsiderable when compared with the enormous revolution that in the course of a few years made the cotton manufacture the greatest of English industries. At the end of the seventeenth century great quantities of cheap

[1] See Pitt's remarkable speech in 1796, *Parl. Hist.* xxxii. 705–712.

[2] Wade's *History of the Middle and Working Classes*, p. 99.

and graceful Indian calicoes, muslins, and chintzes were imported into England, and they found such favour that the woollen and silk manufacturers were seriously alarmed. Acts of Parliament were accordingly passed in 1700 and in 1721 absolutely prohibiting, with a very few specified exceptions, the employment of printed or dyed calicoes in England, either in dress or in furniture, and the use of any printed or dyed goods of which cotton formed any part.[1] A taste, however, had sprung up which it was found impossible to arrest, and a native manufacture began, though of more than doubtful legality. Manchester became its chief centre, and it was at last recognised, though with some restrictions, by an Act of 1736.[2] But the so-called cotton products were not entirely cotton. Only the weft, or transverse threads, were cotton. It was provided by the Act of 1736 that the warp, or longitudinal threads, must consist wholly of linen yarn; and the manufacture, though a growing one, long held a very subordinate place in British industries. The historian of the cotton manufacture has observed that at the opening of the eighteenth century, while the average export of woollen goods amounted to 2,000,000*l.*, or more than a fourth part of the total export trade of the kingdom, the export of cotton but little exceeded 23,000*l.*, and that this small sum was above the average of the next forty years. After that period there was a slight improvement, and the exports of cotton in 1750 had risen to 45,000*l.* The same writer has added that in the year 1833, while the woollen exports had increased to 6,539,731*l.*, the cotton exports had risen to not less than 18,486,400*l.*[3]

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[1] 11 & 12 William III. c. 10. 7 George I. c. 7.

[2] Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, pp. 166, 167. M'Culloch's *Account of British Empire*, i. 673.

[3] Ibid. p. 112. In 1882 the total export of woollen and worsted

I do not propose to describe in any detail the succession of closely connected inventions by which this great change was effected, still less to enter into the difficult questions that have been raised regarding the priority of conception among the inventors. It will be sufficient to say that towards the middle of the century the current of taste and fashion had begun to move in the direction of cotton goods, and within a few years, and as a consequence of the increased demand, a number of premature, abortive, or partially successful attempts were made to economise the labour and accelerate the rate of their production. During the first half of the century all cotton yarn was spun in single threads by the hand, and although the industry was pursued in countless farmhouses over England, the supply of cotton yarn continued below the demand, and much below the quantity which it was in the power of the weavers to manufacture. The invention of the fly-shuttle by Kay of Bury, in 1738, aggravated the difficulty, for it about doubled the rapidity of the process of weaving. About 1764, however, Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny, by which, through the instrumentality of a wheel, a number of spindles could be simultaneously worked. When the machine was first framed, it was enabled to work simultaneously eight spindles, and it was soon so improved that a single spinner could spin at once more than a hundred threads of cotton.[1]

Another enormous improvement was effected almost at the same time by the method of spinning by rollers, which were moved at first by the hand, but soon after by water. The first conception of this process has been attributed both to John Wyatt and Lewis Paul.[2] A

manufacture was 22,167,279*l.*; that of cotton, 75,796,205*l.* See Martin's *Statesman's Year-Book*.

[1] Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, pp. 155–159.

[2] The claims of Wyatt will be found stated at length in Baines's *History of the Cotton*

few years later, unsuccessful attempts were made by Thomas Highs to introduce it into use, but it was reserved for Arkwright to perfect the machine, and to make it for the first time the great instrument in the cotton manufacture. His patent was taken out in 1769. In 1774 an Act of Parliament was passed authorising the new manufacture of goods made entirely of cotton, but imposing a duty of threepence per square yard upon them when they were printed, painted, or stained with colours.[1]

Many subsidiary but most wonderful inventions, accomplished within the last quarter of the eighteenth century, completed the transformation. The carding cylinder made it possible to perform by machinery an indispensable portion of the manufacture which had hitherto been performed by hand; the mule of Crompton, so called from its combining the principles of the rolling-machine and the spinning-jenny, immensely improved and accelerated the process of spinning, and it was carried by a succession of inventions to an almost miraculous perfection; the invention of chlorine, and its application by the French chemist Berthollet to the purpose of bleaching cotton cloth, shortened that work from many weeks to a few hours; the invention of cylinder-printing in 1785 multiplied about a hundredfold the rapidity with which calico-printing could be accomplished; the power-loom which Cartwright invented in the same year, and which subsequent inventors greatly improved, gave a new impulse to weaving as decisive as that which Hargreaves and Crompton had given to spinning; and finally in 1789 and 1790 water-power was discarded, and the whole manufacture

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Manufacture, and those of Paul in French's *Life and Times of Crompton*. Guest, in his history of the cotton trade, has mentioned the claims of Highs.

[1] 14 George III. c. 72.

passed under the mighty empire of steam. The bewildering magnitude of the change that was effected is sufficiently shown by the fact, that through successive improvements in machinery not less than 2,200 spindles of cotton have been managed by a single spinner.[1]

These are but the most conspicuous of a long series of mechanical inventions which in a few years made the cotton manufacture of Great Britain the greatest in the world. Most of them passed through more than one phase, and were at first but partially successful; most of them were the work of poor and almost uneducated men, and it is melancholy to observe how many of the inventors, to whom the pre-eminence of English wealth is mainly due, lived and died in poverty, or were exposed to fierce storms of opposition. It is not surprising that it should have been so, for the inventions that have been described being mainly inventions for economising human labour and replacing it by machinery, their immediate effect was necessarily to restrict employment. Kay, the inventor of the flying shuttle, was so persecuted that he left England and established himself in Paris. Hargreaves' house at Blackburn was broken open by the mob. His machines were shattered; he was obliged to fly from his native town, and he took refuge in Nottingham. In 1779, during a period of temporary distress, cotton spinning was almost annihilated in the district of Blackburn by the madness of the mob, who traversed many miles of country, destroying all spinning-jennies with more than twenty spindles, all carding-engines, all water-frames, every machine turned by horses or water. The spinning and calico-printing machinery of Peel, the grandfather of the statesman, was thrown into the river at Altham, and the great manufacturer, finding even his life insecure, retired to

[1] Baines, p. 202.

Burton, where he built another cotton-mill on the banks of the Trent. A large mill built by Arkwright near Chorley was destroyed by the mob in spite of the presence of a powerful body of police and military.[1]

Yet it is certain that very few inventions have in their ultimate effects so largely increased the amount of employment. The number of persons engaged in England in the cotton manufacture was estimated at the beginning of the reign of George III. at about 40,000. In 1785 Pitt reckoned it at 80,000. After this time it increased far more rapidly, and in 1831 it had risen, according to the estimate of M'Culloch, to 833,000.[2] In the first fifty years of the eighteenth century the quantity of cotton imported into England a little more than doubled, and the value of the cotton exports did not quite double. In the last twenty years of the century the former multiplied by eight, and the latter by fifteen and a half.[3]

The prominence Manchester had attained before the great inventions I have described, as a centre of manufacture, enabled it to reap the chief advantages of this most marvellous progress. Other centres, indeed, of the new industry were established in Nottinghamshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, and the West Riding of Yorkshire, as well as in Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire in Scotland. But Lancashire was from the first the pre-eminent home of the cotton manufacture, and its astonishing development is one of the most important facts in the English history of the eighteenth century. Water-power, coal, accumulated capital, and manufacturing enterprise, the great seaport of Liverpool, and an easy access to the iron fields of the neighbouring coun-

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[1] Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, pp. 117, 151, 159, 160.

[2] Ibid. pp. 218, 219, 360.

[3] Ibid. p. 216.

ties, were the chief elements of its progress. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the whole population of this great county was computed at only 166,200, less than a third part of the present population of Liverpool. At the end of the century it had risen to 672,000.[1] In the census of 1881 it is reckoned at 3,454,441.

The immense extension of the cotton manufacture, though the most remarkable, is but one of the events which make the latter half of the eighteenth century the most memorable period in the industrial history of England. To this period also belongs the great English manufacture of earthenware. The Chelsea china, which attained its perfection in the first half of the century, was chiefly due to the skill of French refugees, and two brothers from Holland named Elers established during the same period a small manufacture of earthenware in Staffordshire. They met with much opposition, and at last left the country; but the potteries continued, though they produced only the coarsest ware. In all other kinds French and Dutch earthenwares, by virtue of their indisputable superiority, completely dominated in England until Josiah Wedgwood turned the scale. This great man, like so many of the inventors of the eighteenth century, sprang from the humblest position. He was the youngest of thirteen children in a family which had been long employed in the potteries. His work in the trade was at first of the lowest kind; but he gradually rose into partnership with other workmen; began business on his own account in 1759, and soon after invented a new kind of earthenware which, by its superior durability and texture, almost drove foreign competitors from England and made its way to the most distant quarters of the globe. Before the close of the century it was stated that five-sixths of the quantity

[1] Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, p. 360.

made was exported. The cameos, intaglios, busts, bas-reliefs, medallions, and other similar works produced in the Wedgwood factories formed a new branch of English art, and exhibited a designing power of almost the highest kind. Some of them were designed by Flaxman. Some were imitated from the Etruscan vases which Sir William Hamilton had just brought under English notice; but the new industry in all its parts was mainly due to the extraordinary genius of a single man. Of its industrial importance it is sufficient to say, that in 1785 Wedgwood stated before a committee of the House of Commons, that there were already from 15,000 to 20,000 persons employed directly in the potteries, while a far larger number were engaged in digging coal for them and in raising, preparing, and transporting from distant parts of the kingdom the clay and flints which they required.[1]

Staffordshire now ranks fifth in population among the counties of England. It owes its peculiar density partly to its potteries, but still more to its great mines and manufactures of iron. In the beginning of the eighteenth century its manufacture of nails and utensils of iron was already noted;[2] but the great development of this industry belongs to a much later period. In spite of the enormous quantity of iron which lies beneath the British soil, the manufacture during the first half of the century was small and languid. As long as the process of smelting iron could only be accomplished by wood fuel, it was almost confined to thickly wooded counties, and ironworks proved so fatal to the English woods that the Legislature more than once interposed to restrain them. It is a curious fact that the process of smelting iron by pit coal had been

[1] Macpherson, iii. 380–383. Meteyard's *Life of Wedgwood*.
[2] Chamberlayne's *Present State of Great Britain*, 1710, p. 19.

discovered as early as the reign of James I. by a natural son of Lord Dudley, who took out a patent for it in his father's name. He met, however, with fierce opposition from rival manufacturers; his works were destroyed by rioters; a long series of private calamities and the confusion of the civil wars soon followed, and the newly discovered art, which was destined to be of such transcendent importance, took no root and appears to have been entirely lost. It was revived about 1735 by Darby of Colebrook, and from that time it rapidly spread. The works which had formerly been chiefly carried on in Sussex passed to districts in the neighbourhood of coal, and a new impulse was given to the manufacture by Cort of Gosport, who in 1783 and 1784 introduced the process of puddling and rolling iron. The great period of the English iron manufacture was still to come; but even in the eighteenth century the progress was only less than in the cotton manufacture. In 1740 the quantity of pig-iron made in England and Wales was estimated at but 17,000 tons; in 1796 it was 125,000 tons; in 1806 it was 250,000 tons.[1] Birmingham, Sheffield, and a crowd of other towns in which the manufacture was pursued, advanced with gigantic strides in population and influence.

This progress would have been impossible if there had not been greatly increased facilities for the transport of coal. The growth of manufactures both implied and stimulated the improvement of roads, and it also produced those vast works of inland navigation which distinguished the last forty years of the century. Canals with locks had long been common on the Continent. Italy and Holland in this respect led the way, and several other countries had followed in their steps;

[1] M'Culloch's *Account of the British Empire*, i. 606, 607. Fairbairn's *Iron Manufacture*.

Peter the Great in Russia, and Charles XII. in Sweden, began great works of inland navigation which were continued by their successors. In France a canal uniting the Seine and the Loire was begun under Henry IV. and completed under Lewis XIII., and the great Languedoc Canal, connecting the Mediterranean with the Atlantic, was regarded as one of the supreme achievements of the reign of Lewis XIV. England, however, lagged strangely behind, till the intelligent munificence of the Duke of Bridgewater and the genius of the great engineer Brindley began the network of canals which in a few years intersected the whole of her manufacturing districts. The canal, seven miles long, opened in 1761 between Manchester and the coal mines at Worsley, was constructed at the sole expense of the Duke of Bridgewater, and the aqueduct by which Brindley conducted it at a height of thirty-nine feet over the river Irwell was regarded as one of the most stupendous feats of engineering ever performed in England. The immediate effect of this first canal was to diminish the price of coal in Manchester by one half, and its extension to the Mersey at Runcorn placed Manchester and Liverpool in easy communication, and enormously stimulated the prosperity of both.

Brindley died in 1772, at the early age of fifty-six, but he had designed much more than he lived to accomplish, and the impulse which he had given continued. It is true that, like all other great improvements in locomotion, canals found their sceptics and their opponents. The proposed aqueduct over the Irwell was ridiculed by engineers as a mere 'castle in the air;' and when the feasibility of the schemes of Brindley was proved, there were not wanting those who denounced them as mischievous. Canals, it was predicted, would diminish or ruin the noble English breed of draught-horses; would injure the coasting trade and

therefore the navy of England; would sink vast sums in unprofitable enterprises; would destroy great quantities of land which might be better employed in producing corn. But the manufacturers clearly saw the capital importance of the new waterways; and, by furnishing an easy mode of transporting manure, canals became one of the great means of the improvement of agriculture.

The eighteenth-century movement for the construction of canals has now receded into the background, eclipsed by the more gigantic and astonishing enterprise which has made it possible to traverse on the wings of steam almost every district in the island. The earlier enterprise, however, was unlike anything that had been before seen in England, and it excited a wonder and enthusiasm which even railways have scarcely surpassed. Miss Aikin described in graceful verse the new charm which was added to the English landscape by the silver line of placid water which relieved and brightened the barren and gloomy moor, while white sails might be seen gleaming through the dusky trees, or moving like swans in their flight, far above the traveller's head. In 1790 a vast design of Brindley was accomplished by the completion of the chain of works which connected the four great ports of London, Bristol, Liverpool, and Hull; and in the same year, after the labour of twenty-two years, the canal was opened which connected the Forth with the Clyde. It was pronounced to be superior to every other work of the kind in Europe, and it raised vessels capable of navigating the ocean to the height of 156 feet above the level of the sea, and, in one of the aqueducts, sixty-five feet above the natural river. About the time when the great war began, speculations in canals had assumed dimensions which almost foreshadowed the railway mania of the nineteenth century. In the four years

which ended in 1794, it was noticed that not less than eighty-one Acts of Parliament were passed for navigable canals and improvements in inland navigation, and it was computed that before the rise of railways not less than 2,600 miles of navigable canal had been constructed in England, as well as 276 in Ireland and 225 in Scotland, and that about 50,000,000*l.* had been invested in their construction.[1]

But the greatest of all the industrial inventions of the eighteenth century, when measured by its future consequence, was the improvement of the steam-engine by Watt. The expansive power of steam had indeed been long noticed. A rotatory machine moved by steam is mentioned by Hero of Alexandria 120 years before the Christian era, and after a long interval the possibility of applying the force of steam to practical purposes appears to have struck several independent thinkers of the seventeenth century. A French engineer named De Caus, an Italian philosopher named Branca, the celebrated Marquis of Worcester, and the great French mathematician, Denis Papin, had all contributed something to the discovery; and just before the close of the seventeenth century the model of a steam-engine for raising water from mines was presented to the Royal Society by an English engineer named Savery. In 1705, however, the machine of Savery was superseded by another which was more efficient and economical, invented by a blacksmith named Newcomen; and from this time the use of the steam-engine in collieries appears to have been habitual. In 1761 a patent was

[1] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 203, 257, 282, 283, 300. Philips's *History of Inland Navigation*. Smiles' *Lives of the Engineers: Life of Brindley*. There is a good chapter in Philips on the history of continental canals, and I have also derived some information on this subject from Andreossy, *Hist. du Canal du Midi* (an viii).

granted to Jonathan Greenal of Parr, in the county of Lancaster, for a newly invented fire-engine for draining mines, coal-pits, and lands from water ;[1] and two years later an engine was cast in Colebrookdale which was said to be the largest ever produced, and which was expected to raise at a stroke 307 cwt. of water.[2]

James Watt, to whom the complete transformation of the steam-engine is due, was born at Greenock in 1736. His father was a carpenter and shipwright in very modest circumstances, and he himself for several years showed little promise of greatness. He was a slow, shy, plodding, self-concentrated boy, with weak health and low spirits, entirely without brilliancy and fire, but with an evident natural turn for mechanics. When he was nineteen he was sent to London to learn the trade of making mathematical instruments, and about two years later he settled in Glasgow, where the great qualities of his genius speedily developed. Among his warmest and most faithful friends was the philosopher Black, whose recent and splendid discovery of latent heat largely assisted Watt in his experiments. It was in 1763, when repairing for the University of Glasgow a defective model of Newcomen's engine, that Watt first steadily directed his mind to the improvement of the steam-engine, and he introduced a succession of changes which soon altered its whole character. By the device of a separate condenser he saved an enormous waste of heat, and therefore of fuel, which had hitherto done much to make the engine unprofitable, and he at the same time vastly increased its force by making steam instead of atmospheric pressure the motive power of the downward movement of the piston. In the earlier engines steam had been employed only for the purpose

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[1] *Annual Register*, 1761, p. 73.

[2] Ibid. 1763, p. 66. See, too, the description of another great steam-engine, ibid. 1768, p. 62.

of creating by its condensation a vacuum, and thus producing the pressure of air upon the piston by which the working power of the machine was directly effected.

I cannot undertake to describe the succession of mechanical improvements introduced by Watt. His first patent for his engine was obtained in 1769, and, in spite of considerable opposition, it was extended in 1775 for twenty-five years. His career, though at last crowned with splendid success and a large fortune, was full of difficulty and opposition, and it was darkened by weak health and extreme constitutional despondency. For many years his works were unremunerative ; the burden of debt hung heavily upon him, and when success arrived he was exposed to much opposition from rival inventors, to shameful attempts to defraud him of his dues, and to at least seven years of harassing litigation. It was his good fortune, however, to be early supported by Dr. John Roebuck, a man of singular enterprise and ability, who carried on large ironworks on the Carron, in Stirlingshire, and afterwards, when Roebuck had been ruined, to be taken into partnership by Matthew Boulton, the head of the great ironworks at Soho, near Birmingham.

Assisted by the capital and labour at the disposal of a great manufacturer, the most splendid inventive genius of the eighteenth century had full scope to display itself. For many years, however, after the first invention of Watt, the steam-engine seemed likely to hold only a very subsidiary place among the inventions of the eighteenth century. It was an instrument of admirable power and efficiency, but its only motion was vertical, and its utility was almost confined to the single purpose of pumping up water. Sometimes, no doubt, the water thus pumped up was employed to turn a wheel, and steam thus occasionally came into use in manufactures when a natural current could not be obtained, but in

general it was employed only in mining and drainage. The idea, however, was evidently spreading among inventors that new motions, and therefore new applications, might be given to the machine; and there were several independent inventors, though it was reserved for Watt most fully and most completely to succeed. After many years of patient labour he succeeded in giving to the steam-engine a rotatory motion and a parallel motion, and, by the regulating centrifugal force of the governor, in placing the machine in all its various and combined motions under the complete control of the mechanic. A power of enormous force was thus called into being, which could be applied with the utmost facility and the most absolute certainty in the most various directions. Steam locomotion, though it was more than once suggested, projected, attempted, and even in some small degree accomplished in the eighteenth century, was not fully achieved till a few years later; but from the time of the later inventions of Watt it had become a certainty. Gradually, during the last twenty years of the century, the new engines came into use as the motive power in manufactures, performing with enormously increased strength and efficiency what had formerly been done by the human muscles, by animals, by wind, or by water. No other invention since the discovery of printing has affected so widely, so variously, and so powerfully the interests of mankind.[1]

Such were the chief inventions that transformed England from a country which was essentially agricultural into a country which was essentially manufactur-

[1] See Lardner *On the Steam-Engine*. The Lives of Watt by Muirhead and by Smiles. Beckmann's *History of Inventions*. *Encyclopædia Brit.* art. 'Steam-Engines.'

ing, and produced in a few generations those vast accumulations of wealth and those vast agglomerations of population, on which so great a part of its modern character depends. It is a superficial and erroneous view which seeks the consequences of such changes only in industrial and political spheres. The conditions under which men live affect the whole type of their characters, and inventions that are purely mechanical ultimately influence profoundly both opinions and morals. To trace with any completeness the vast and multifarious consequences of the manufacturing development of England would require in itself a long book; and all that can here be done is to sketch a meagre outline.

The first and most obvious fact is that the triumphant issue of the great French war was largely, if not mainly, due to the cotton-mill and the steam-engine. England might well place the statues of Watt and Arkwright by the side of those of Wellington and Nelson, for had it not been for the wealth which they created she could never have supported an expenditure which, during the last ten years of the war, averaged more than eighty-four millions a year, and rose in 1814 to one hundred and six millions, nor could she have endured without bankruptcy a national debt which had risen in 1816 to eight hundred and eighty-five millions.[1]

The magnitude of the resources which she discovered in the time of her deepest need is sufficiently shown by the fact that the cotton exports alone during the period of the war, from 1793 to 1815, amounted in value to 250,000,000*l.*[2] There was hardly a branch of manufacture in which production and profits were not suddenly and enormously increased by the application of steam, and under the influence of the inventions of the eighteenth

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[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, pp. 480, 482.

[2] Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, p. 504.

century the coal-fields and iron-beds of England gave her a new and mighty element of power and ascendency in the world.

The gains in the first stage of the progress were naturally the most gigantic. It has been noticed that when Pitt established the legacy duty, he thought it absurd to provide for a legacy duty on properties above a million; but in half a century the scale of fortunes had so changed, that scarcely a year passed in which such properties were not bequeathed.[1] The few great bankers, the few rich merchants of the eighteenth century, formed a wholly insignificant counterpoise to the vast balance of wealth which was then in the hands of the landed interest. The small place given to them in the estimate of Gregory King at the end of the seventeenth century shows conclusively how little importance the class had as yet acquired. But the manufacturing aristocracy produced by cotton and by iron soon became an important political element in the country, possessing as great employers of labour a natural influence hardly less than that of the largest owners of the soil.

The effects of manufactures on the happiness and prosperity of the masses of the English people have been more various, more chequered, and more contested. It is idle, however, to dispute the advantages of inventions which have incalculably increased both production and employment, and have at the same time replaced by machinery the most burdensome forms of human toil. Millions of men and women are now living in England who could not possibly have subsisted there but for the great inventions that have been described; and in spite of many fluctuations, the wages of this vastly increased population have usually been higher, not merely absolutely but also in their purchasing

[1] See *England as It is*, by William Johnston, c. xii.

power, than those which were earned before these inventions had arisen. The multiplication and the diversity of possible employments have been of incalculable advantage to the poor, and manufactures more than any other single influence have enabled poor men of energy and skill to rise above the positions in which they were born. Examples of such a rise were, of course, most numerous in the earlier days of the great manufactures; but in the skilled artisans the manufacturing system still produces a large class whose general well-being is probably unequalled by any corresponding class on the Continent, and who in intelligence and energy form one of the most valuable elements of English life. Tracts of England which had formerly been almost waste and barbarous have been made prosperous and wealthy. Agriculture has started into a new perfection, in response to the vast demand for agricultural products which the great manufacturing centres have made. The high rate of wages in manufacturing towns has reacted upon the condition of the agricultural labourers, and raised the standard of wages in the surrounding country. Capital, skill, and energy acquired in manufacturing enterprise have ultimately passed largely into country life; and the genius of Watt and Stephenson has brought distant markets almost to the doors of the farmer. Cheap clothing of calico and cotton, cheap tools, cheap means of transporting himself and the products which he wishes either to buy or to sell, cheap methods of communicating with his absent friends, and a cheap press to instruct and to amuse, are among the many blessings which machinery has bestowed upon the agricultural poor, while great centres of intelligence and energy have multiplied over the land and diffused their intellectual and moral influence through the remotest districts.

Human progress, however, rarely means more than

a surplus of advantages over evils, and the evils that accompanied the sudden growth of manufactures were very great. We have already seen its powerful effects in the destruction of small farms. Partly by ruining the domestic manufactures and compelling the enclosure of the commons, which alone enabled in many districts the poor farmer to subsist; partly by the temptation of higher wages, which has been steadily drawing the poorer population of the country to the great towns—manufactures have contributed most powerfully to give English country life its present type. In spite of the extraordinary rapidity with which the inventions in manufactures succeeded one another, it was some years before the factory system obtained a complete ascendency, and each stage of its triumphant march was marked by the ruin of industrious men. Not only the manufactures pursued in the farmhouse, but also those on a somewhat larger scale pursued in the towns, were destroyed. The woollen manufacture in the eighteenth century was carried on by great numbers of small masters in their own homes. They usually employed about ten journeymen and apprentices, who were bound to them by long contracts, who boarded in the master's house, and who worked together with him and under his immediate superintendence. In Leeds and its neighbourhood in 1806, there were no less than 3,500 of these establishments. But the gigantic factory, with its vast capital, its costly machinery, and its extreme subdivision of labour, soon swept them away.[1] Hand-loom-weaving—once a flourishing trade—long maintained a desperate competition against the factories, and as late as 1830 a very competent observer described the multitude of weavers, who were living in the great cities, in houses utterly unfit for human habitation, working

[1] See Howell's *Conflicts of Capital and Labour*, pp. 84–88.

fourteen hours a day and upwards, and earning only from five to eight shillings a week.[1]

The sanitary neglect, the demoralisation, the sordid poverty, the acute and agonising want prevailing among great sections of the population of our manufacturing towns during the fifty or sixty years that followed the inventions of Arkwright and Crompton, can hardly be exaggerated. Human nature has seldom shown itself in a more unlovely form than in those crowded and pestilential alleys, in that dark and sulphurous atmosphere. The transition from one form of industry to another, the violent fluctuations of wages and of work, the sudden disruption of old ties and habits and associations, the transfer of thousands of female spinners from their country homes to the crowded factory, the vast masses of ignorance and pauperism that were attracted to the towns by vague prospects of employment, have all led to a misery and demoralisation of an extreme character. The transitions of industry are always painful, but very few transitions have been so much so as that in the closing years of the eighteenth century. No system of national education had prepared the people for the change. The settled conditions of labour, which had formerly produced much of the effect of education upon character, were destroyed, and the increase of the great towns under the stimulus of the new inventions was so portentously rapid that it utterly outstripped the efforts of religious and philanthropical organisation. Two very unfortunate influences also concurred to aggravate the situation. The enormous rise in the price of corn accompanying the great French war rendered the period of transition peculiarly trying, and the great

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[1] Kay's *Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes*, p. 44. Wade's *History of the Middle and Working Classes*, p. 571. Ure's *Philosophy of Manufacture*, pp. 334–336.

increase of population in Ireland produced a large Irish immigration, which not only lowered the wages of the English labourer, but also most seriously and permanently depressed his standard of comfort.[1]

It was evident, indeed, that the new conditions of labour were in some important respects much less favourable to moral purity and development than those which preceded them, and also that they were calculated to produce serious social and political danger. The system, which is rapidly spreading through all industry, of vast undertakings supported by small profits on an immense scale, inevitably tends to wider divisions of classes and greater contrasts of wealth and poverty. Whenever an industry passes from the restraint of strong custom and regulating laws into a condition of highly stimulated and unshackled competition, production is increased, prices are lowered, general well-being is augmented, but the relative strength and weakness of individuals, and the relative positions of different classes, are more distinctly separated. Economical and material progress is not always accompanied with a corresponding social and moral improvement, and there is reason to believe that in the early days of the manufacturing system the disparity between them was unusually great. A very intelligent observer named Francis Place, who rose himself from the position of a working man, and who devoted much research to the changes of manners and morals that had occurred during the first great period of manufacturing development, has described in a pamphlet written in 1829, and in evidence before a Parliamentary Committee in 1835, the changes which had taken place

[1] See a powerful statement of the effects of Irish emigration on the English working classes in Kay's *Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes* (1832).

within his recollection. The most important was the great difference in manners and morals that had arisen between different classes of workmen. When he wrote, he said, the difference in these respects between the skilled workman of London and the common labourer was as great as the difference between the workman and his employer. Drunkenness had diminished. The best-paid workmen were as a rule the least dissolute, and as the old members of the class dropped off, the improvement became more marked. But this difference had been almost wholly created within a single lifetime. He could remember when there was no appreciable distinction of morals and manners between the different sorts of London workmen. Few could write. Very few ever looked into a book. Mechanics' institutes, book clubs, and a crowd of institutions which produce educated tastes among the working classes, were as yet unborn. The amusements of all grades of workmen in London were of the same type—drinking and gambling in the public-house, where they held their clubs and played a game of chance or skill for a pot of beer or a quartern of gin; songs and ballads of revolting indecency; a few tea-gardens usually thronged with prostitutes and thieves; duck hunts in the great ponds near Tottenham Court Road; occasional badger-baiting, dog-fighting, or bull-baiting. In general, he observed, the most skilful workmen, as they had most money to spend, were the most dissolute.[1]

These remarks referred to the workmen of London, but there can be little doubt that the picture was

[1] Place *On the Improvement of the Working People*. There is an abstract of his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, in Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, pp. 683–685. See, too, the curious collection of documents relating to the history of manners, made by Place, and now in the British Museum, Add. MSS. 27825.

equally applicable to those of the great manufacturing towns at the period of which I am writing. Under the excellent management and discipline of the great factories, a standard of comfort and well-being has now been attained which is beyond all praise, and high wages, combined with many opportunities of improvement and saving, have raised the level of civilisation in the operative class far above that of the eighteenth century. But the many factory laws which it was found necessary to enact after careful parliamentary inquiries, and at the very time when public feeling in England was running most strongly in the direction of unrestricted industry and trade, show clearly how serious and how incontestable were the evils originally connected with the system.

The most serious was the constant employment of very young children, in work so severe and prolonged that it must have almost inevitably ruined them for life. Some foreign writers have attributed this evil to Pitt. They say that he once received a deputation of manufacturers who complained of the depression of their trade, and that he dismissed them with the terrible advice, 'Take the children.'[1] The story is, I believe, without authority, and the system of employing children in great numbers had sprung up before any recorded speech of Pitt upon the subject. It was an inevitable consequence of the introduction of machinery, which, needing no physical force, made cheap child-labour available. It is, however, true that Pitt left the enormous abuse of child-labour which grew up in his time entirely unrestricted by law, while he strongly urged the propriety of turning the industry of children to profit. In a speech on the

[1] This statement is made by Michelet, *La Femme*, and repeated by Jules Simon, *L'Ouvrière*. See the very emphatic contradiction of it in Lord Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iv. 405, 406.

depressed condition of the labouring classes he observed: 'Experience has already shown how much could be done by the industry of children, and the advantages of early employing them in such branches of manufactures as they are capable to execute. The extension of schools of industry is also an object of material importance. If anyone would take the trouble to compute the amount of all the earnings of the children who are already educated in this manner, he would be surprised when he came to consider the weight which their support by their own labours took off the country, and the addition which, by the fruits of their toil and the habits to which they were formed, was made to its internal opulence.'[1]

Within carefully guarded limits, child-labour is no more to be objected to in manufactures than in agriculture, but in the early days of the factory system these limits were utterly discarded. In the very infancy of the system it became the custom of the master manufacturers to contract with the managers of workhouses throughout England and of charitable institutions in Scotland, to send their young children to the factories of the great towns. Many thousands of children between the ages of six and ten were thus sent, uncared for and unprotected, and left at the complete disposal of masters whose only aim was speedily to amass a fortune, and who knew that if the first supply of infant-labour was used up, there was still much more to be obtained. Thousands of children at this early age might be found working in the factories of England and Scotland, usually from twelve to fourteen, sometimes even fifteen or sixteen, hours a day, not unfrequently during the greater part of the night. Destitute or drunken or unnatural parents made it a regular system to raise money by hiring out their children from

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxii. 710.

six, sometimes from five, years old, by written contracts and for long periods. In one case brought before Parliament, a gang of these children was put up for sale among a bankrupt's effects, and publicly advertised as part of the property. In another, an agreement was disclosed between a London parish and a Lancashire manufacturer, in which it was stipulated that with every twenty sound children one idiot should be taken. Instances of direct and aggravated cruelty to particular children were probably rare, and there appears a general agreement of evidence that they were confined to the small factories. But labour prolonged for periods that were utterly inconsistent with the health of children was general. In forty-two out of forty-three factories at Manchester, it was stated before the Parliamentary Committee in 1816 that the actual hours of daily work ranged from twelve to fourteen, and in one case they were fourteen and a half. Even as late as 1840, when the most important manufactures had been regulated by law, Lord Ashley was able to show that boys employed in the carpet manufacture at Kidderminster were called up at three and four in the morning, and kept working sixteen or eighteen hours; that children of five years old were engaged in the unhealthy trade of pin-making, and were kept at work from six in the morning to eight at night.[1]

[1] The facts relating to the factory system will be found in the reports of several parliamentary committees on the subject, and in the debates on the different factory laws. See, too, Alfred's *History of the Factory Movement*; the correspondence between Senior and Horner 'on the Factory Act' (1837); the published speeches of Lord Ashley; Kay's *Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes*; Bulwer's *England and the English*, book ii. ch. v.; and the skilful analysis of the evidence taken before the Factory Commissioners, drawn up in the interests of the manufacturers in 1834. On the foreign factories see a report of Ch. Dupin on the labour of children, laid before the French House of Peers in 1840 and 1841, and Gillet, *Sur l'Emploi des Enfants* (1840).

It was one of the effects of the immense development of the cotton manufacture, that negro slavery in America, which at the time of Washington seemed likely to be extinguished by an easy and natural process, at once assumed gigantic dimensions. It was hardly more horrible, however, than the white slavery which, for some years after the establishment of the factory system, prevailed both in England and on the Continent. Some of the great manufacturers were fully sensible of the evil. To the first Sir Robert Peel, who was among the greatest of them, is chiefly due the first Factory Act, which was carried in 1802 ; and the Ashtons, the Ashworths, and the Gregs were early noted for the conspicuous and enlightened humanity which they displayed in the management of their factories. But the struggle for the Factory Acts was on the whole carried on in the teeth of fierce class opposition, as well as strong intellectual and political tendencies, and the success of those Acts will furnish one of the most curious and instructive pages in the history of the nineteenth century.

In some most essential respects the growth of the great manufacturing towns was altering the character of England. For many generations after the Revolution, the county members formed especially the independent, and also the mobile, element in the House of Commons; and in the Reform plans of both Pitts an increase of county representation was put forward as the most efficacious means of infusing into it health, purity, and energy. The movement of progress and of change in all its forms was very languid, and the feeling of the country was essentially conservative. The English Constitution, as it appears in the writings of Burke, and as it in fact existed for many generations after the Revolution of 1688, was a thing which owed its excellence quite as much to the singular union in the English

character of self-reliance, practical good sense, love of compromise, and dislike to theoretical, experimental, or organic change, as to any law that can be found in the statute book. The patient acquiescence in all kinds of theoretical irregularities and anomalies provided they worked well; the reverence for habit, precedent, and tradition; the dislike to pushing principles to their extreme logical consequences, and the essential moderation which the English people have almost always shown even in the periods of their greatest excitement, have been main causes of the longevity and the reality of their freedom. It is a memorable fact that there are few periods in English history in which so many important laws were made for the protection of religious, political, and individual liberty as during the great Royalist reaction of the Restoration;[1] while, as Burke has abundantly shown, the prescriptive, hereditary, and conservative character of the English monarchy was never more carefully and elaborately asserted than by the statesmen who made the Revolution of 1688. The sound practical judgment and the systematic moderation of the Governments which carried England safely through the long period of a foreign dynasty and of a disputed succession, have been abundantly shown in the present work.

Nor were these qualities confined to the eighteenth century. The intelligent middle classes, who were the true centre of political power in that golden period of the Constitution between the Reform Bill of 1832 and the Reform Bill of 1867, eminently possessed them. The conduct of the Whig Ministers in the years that immediately followed their great Reform Bill is well deserving of the study of all political thinkers.

[1] See a very remarkable enumeration of these measures in Buckle's *Hist. of Civilisation*, i 350–353.

Sir Robert Peel, who led the Opposition, possessed an administrative skill which none of his contemporaries and scarcely any of his predecessors could rival, and, with a sagacity that he did not always show, he at once accepted the Reform Bill he had so strenuously opposed, and raised the banner of administrative reform. There were not wanting those behind the Whig Ministers who urged them to meet this policy by the obvious party device of a further movement for organic change, and availing themselves of a tide of public feeling, which had almost risen to the height of revolution, to attack the House of Lords and to effect a complete transformation of the Constitution. Nothing, in my opinion, in the whole course of English parliamentary history is more deserving of admiration, nothing is more characteristic of the best traditions of English public life, than the firmness and the patriotism with which the Whig leaders resisted the temptation, repressed the revolutionary tendency among their followers, applied themselves to calming passions which were becoming dangerous to the historic framework of English government, and risked all their popularity by effecting one of the most needed but most unpopular of administrative changes, the reform of the old poor law.

How far the spirit which produced such a course of policy continues may well be doubted. The old elements of the English character remain, but their proportions are differently mixed. The habits and mental tendencies of a people who are essentially agricultural will always differ from those of a people where the predominant political power rests mainly in great towns, and this, through the astonishing growth of manufactures, has now become pre-eminently the character of England. It has been noticed that of towns of more than forty thousand inhabitants there are now fifty-five in Great Britain and Ireland, twenty-eight in France, twenty-

four in Italy, twenty-one in Prussia, fourteen in Russia, and six in Austria.[1] In France revolutionary movements in the great towns have often reversed by violence the conservative tendencies in the country. In England the growing influence of great towns is shown in a gradual modification of the type and habits of political thought. When opinions are formed and discussed by great masses of men, and especially by men of the artisan class, when they are constantly made the subjects of debate before large and popular audiences and in a spirit of fierce controversy, the empire of habit, tradition, and reverence will naturally diminish; anomalies and irregularities of all kinds will be keenly felt; institutions will be judged only by their superficial aspects and by their immediate and most obvious consequences; remote and indirect consequences, however real and grave, will have little influence on opinion; nothing that is complex or subtle in its character, and nothing that is not susceptible of an immediate popular and plausible treatment, is regarded ; and the appetite for experiment, for change, for the excitement of political agitation, steadily grows. The alteration of mental habits partly due to the great increase of town life, and partly also to other causes, may, I think, be clearly traced, stealing over the English character. The political pulse beats more quickly. A touch of fever has passed into the body politic, and the Constitution is moving more rapidly through its successive phases of transformation and of decay.

The most serious political questions that have agitated England in the nineteenth century have all been very largely affected by the great industrial inventions of the eighteenth century. It was these inventions that gave parliamentary reform its supreme and pressing im-

[1] Cunningham's *Conditions of Social Wellbeing* (1878).

portance. The anomaly of rising and flourishing towns without representatives, while decayed and deserted villages sent one or two members to Parliament, was indeed not new, but it was the vast and sudden transfer of population and wealth to the northern half of England and the immense multiplication and aggrandisement of manufacturing towns which made a plan of representation, that had been scarcely altered for two centuries and a half, completely inadequate for some of the chief purposes of representative government. Unfortunately, too, this great alteration in the disposition of population and power took place at a time when that indiscriminate dread of all change, which the French Revolution had produced, was at its height, and all proposals to mitigate the disparity by transferring a few seats from disfranchised boroughs to the large towns were rejected. Great masses of unrepresented opinion grew up in the island, and the consequence was that mighty wave of popular feeling which carried the Reform Bill of 1832.

To the mechanical inventions, also, of the eighteenth century the Corn Law question was mainly due. It was only when England had taken her gigantic strides in the direction of manufacturing ascendency, that the pressure of population on subsistence became seriously felt, and the manufacturers gradually assumed the attitude of the champions of free trade. No transformation could have been more astonishing or more complete. Scarcely a form of manufacturing industry had ever been practised in England that had not been fortified by restrictions or subsidised by bounties. The extreme narrowness and selfishness of that manufacturing influence which became dominant at the Revolution had alienated America, had ruined the rising industries of Ireland, had crushed the calico manufactures of India, had imposed on the consumer at home, monopoly prices

for almost every article he required. As Adam Smith conclusively shows, the merchants and manufacturers of England had for generations steadily and successfully aimed at two great objects—to secure for themselves by restrictive laws an absolute monopoly of the home market, and to stimulate their foreign trade by bounties paid by the whole community. The language of the great founder of English political economy illustrates with curious vividness how entirely modern is the notion that the manufacturing interest has a natural bias towards free trade. 'Country gentlemen and farmers,' he wrote, 'are, to their great honour, of all people the least subject to the wretched spirit of monopoly. The undertaker of a great manufactory is sometimes alarmed if another work of the same kind is established within twenty miles of him. . . . Farmers and country gentlemen, on the contrary, are generally disposed rather to promote than to obstruct the cultivation and improvement of their neighbours' farms and estates. . . . Merchants and manufacturers being collected into towns, and accustomed to that exclusive corporation spirit which prevails in them, naturally endeavour to obtain against all their countrymen the same exclusive privileges which they generally possess against the inhabitants of their respective towns. They accordingly seem to have been the original inventors of those restraints upon the importation of foreign goods which secure to them the monopoly of the home market. It was probably in imitation of them, and to put themselves upon a level with those who, they found, were disposed to oppress them, that the country gentlemen and farmers of Great Britain so far forgot the generosity which is natural to their station as to demand the exclusive privilege of supplying their countrymen with corn and butcher's meat. They did not perhaps take time to consider how much less their interest could be

affected by the freedom of trade than that of the people whose example they followed.'[1]

Such was the relative attitude of the two classes towards the close of the century. But during the French war a great change took place. On the one hand, the necessity of supplying England with food when almost all Europe was combined against her brought into costly cultivation vast portions of land, both in England and Ireland, which were little adapted for corn culture, and on which it could only subsist under the encouragement of extravagant prices. On the other hand, the growth of the manufacturing towns produced an extreme pressure of population on subsistence, and a great reduction of the corn duties became absolutely inevitable. Under these circumstances the manufacturing leaders strenuously supported the agitation for their total repeal. As great employers of labour, it was to them a class interest of the most direct and important character; and, by a singular felicity, while they were certain to obtain an enormous share of the benefits of the change, the whole risk and loss would fall upon others. The movement was easily turned into a war of classes; and the great, wealthy, and intelligent class which directed and paid for it, conducted it so skilfully, that multitudes of Englishmen even now look on it as a brilliant exhibition of disinterested patriotism, and applaud the orators who delight in contrasting the enlightened and liberal spirit of English manufacturers with the besotted selfishness of English landlords.

Another effect of the growth of manufactures was to influence very considerably the prevailing opinions about the legitimate sphere of Government interference. 'It is one of the finest problems of legislation,' Burke truly

[1] *Wealth of Nations*, bk. iv. ch. ii.

wrote, 'what the State ought to take upon itself and to direct by the public wisdom, and what it ought to leave with as little interference as possible to individual discretion.'[1] It may be added that there are few questions upon which more various and conflicting answers have been given in different ages and countries. In classical antiquity the sphere of government and the sphere of morals were regarded as almost co-extensive. The State undertook to discharge authoritatively moral functions which in modern societies are left chiefly to religions. It set before itself a distinct moral ideal, and it was held to be its supreme end to make wise, virtuous, and capable citizens. It is the task of governors, according to Plato, to 'draw from what Homer calls the divine form and likeness subsisting among men; effacing one thing and putting in another, till they have, as far as possible, made human morals pleasing to the gods.'[2] In that great mediæval and feudal system of law which grew up under the influence of Catholicism, and which after the Reformation still survived in its most essential parts in the laws of the Tudors, the sphere of government was equally extended. Religious belief and religious worship were rigidly prescribed by law and enforced by the severest penalties. Sumptuary laws regulated in minute detail private manners and expenses. Wages and prices were both determined, not by free competition, but by law. Industry in all its departments moved under the restraints and supports of the guilds. Landed property was held, subject to many rigid conditions, and special laws determined how much land must be ploughed, and how much might be left in pasture; how much land must surround a labourer's cottage; how many sheep should be supported on a farm. It was, in a word, within the accepted duty of the Govern-

[1] Burke's *Thoughts on Scarcity.*

[2] *Republic*, vi. c. 13.

ment to regulate the social condition of the nation in all its details, with a view to promote the physical and moral well-being of all classes and the strength of the nation as a whole.

This theory of government gradually wore itself away, although the brief period of Puritan ascendency in England, and in the American colonies, exhibited authoritative interference with private manners carried almost to the highest point. Several causes, however, into which it is not now necessary to enter, had produced in England from a very early period a spirit of independence and self-assertion much greater than on the Continent, and the empire of Government over the individual was never so absolute. After the Restoration a new and purely secular theory of government began to dominate, though many fragments of the old feudal laws remained, blending, often very successfully, with more modern legislation. After the Revolution the restriction of the sphere of Government interference proceeded more rapidly. There was a disputed succession, and a Government which did not really represent the sentiments of the majority of the nation, and the Revolution settlement was only kept in existence by a studied moderation, by holding the reins very loosely, by avoiding as much as possible all occasions of friction or collision. At the same time, the most powerful intellectual movements tended to withdraw great departments of human affairs from Government coercion and control. Complete religious toleration and perfect liberty in the expression of political opinion were both substantially achieved. Attempts to regulate manners by sumptuary laws came to an end, though Blackstone notices that when he wrote there was still in the statute book an obsolete law of Edward III. ordaining that no one should be served at dinner and supper with more than two courses, except on some great holidays,

when he might have three.[1] The regulation of morals, except as far as the well-being of society was directly affected, though not formally abandoned, was no longer seriously undertaken. A law of 1746 punishing profane swearing by fines proportioned to the rank of the culprit,[2] and a few laws against gambling, were the most conspicuous exceptions, though, as we have already seen, the Evangelical movement produced some tendency among private persons to attempt prosecutions under obsolete laws enforcing the strict observance of Sunday, or punishing different kinds of immorality.

In general, however, legislation was now confined to the protection of life and property and the regulation of industry, and the opinion that in the latter sphere most Government interference was mischievous was steadily gaining ground. During the whole of the eighteenth century the famous law of Elizabeth determining the conditions of industry was in force.[3] It provided that no one could lawfully exercise any art, mystery, or manual occupation without having served in it at least seven years as an apprentice; that no one should be bound as an apprentice who was not under twenty-one years, and whose parents did not possess a certain fortune; that every master who had three apprentices must keep one journeyman, and for every other apprentice above three, one other journeyman; that no one should be engaged as a servant or journeyman for less than a year; that the hours of work should be twelve in summer, and from dawn to night in winter, and finally that wages should be assessed for the year by the justices of the peace or town magistrates, who were also directed to settle all disputes between masters

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[1] Blackstone, bk. iv. ch. xiii. [2] Ibid. ch. iv.
[3] 5 Eliz. c. 4.

and apprentices. Another law which was passed under James I.[1] extended the power of the justices and town magistrates to fix the wages of all kinds of labourers and workmen.

These Acts, however, soon fell into desuetude, and it is remarkable that it was especially the workmen who appear to have clung to them. The Act of Elizabeth was confined to market towns, and to forms of industry which had existed before it was passed. In country villages a person might exercise trades without having served a seven years' apprenticeship, and in recent trades the whole system of regulation was abandoned.[2] The great woollen manufacture, in addition to the Act of Elizabeth, was minutely regulated by earlier statutes, but towards the middle of the eighteenth century there were bitter complaints among the workmen that the justices refused to fix the rate of wages as the law required, and after some strikes and riots an Act was passed in 1756 again ordering the justices to settle yearly the rate of wages in this manufacture.[3] Some other trades were carried on in corporations under bye-laws which were very imperfectly observed, and there were complaints that masters had overstocked their trades with multitudes of parish apprentices; that wages were not fixed by law and by the year, but fluctuated and sank with competition. Many petitions were presented by workmen imploring Parliament to regulate them, and several laws for this purpose were passed during the eighteenth century.

As far as can now be judged, the restrictive system, regulating the number of apprentices and settling for long periods the rate of wages, appears to have been

[1] 1 James I. c. 6.

[2] *Wealth of Nations*, bk. i. ch. x. part ii. Blackstone, bk. i. ch. xiv.

[3] 29 George II. c. 33.

popular with the workmen; but the masters in general opposed or evaded the restrictions, and the great developments, changes, and fluctuations of industry towards the close of the century produced new conditions to which the old regulations were inapplicable. There was a period of great industrial anarchy. The custom of assessing wages by the justices of the peace or by the Lord Mayor appears to have become very generally obsolete. In the silk manufacture, however, in consequence of great prevailing distress, three laws called 'The Spitalfields Acts' were passed, providing minutely for the regulation of wages by the Lord Mayor or justices of the peace. Employers giving more or less than the assessed wages to their workmen or evading the Acts, as well as journeymen entering into combinations to raise wages, were condemned to fines, which were to be applied to the relief of needy weavers and their families.[1] In the last years of the century new and very stringent laws were made forbidding combinations of workmen to raise wages.[2] Laws of this kind had already frequently appeared in the statute book, and as long as all the conditions of trade were legally regulated, they were natural and justifiable. When, however, the law ceased to regulate wages, and the masters were at full liberty to concert to depress them, the combination laws against workmen became a glaring injustice. It is probable that they may be partially explained by the extreme dread of popular associations that might assume a political and Jacobinical form which the French Revolution had produced.[3]

[1] 13 George III. c. 68; 32 George III. c. 44; 51 George III. c. 7.

[2] See a full enumeration of these Acts in 5 George IV. c. 95, the law that repealed them.

[3] The details of this struggle will be found in Brentano *On Guilds*, and in Howell's *Conflicts of Labour and Capital*, pp. 81–110. See, too, some excellent remarks of Mr. Cunningham, *Politics and Economics*.

The number of restrictions falling upon industry, and the number of taxes, partly indeed for the purpose of revenue, but partly also for the purpose of regulation, that rested upon its products, were very great. Even before the many taxes that grew out of the war of the American Revolution a foreign observer noticed that an Englishman was taxed when he got up, for his soap; at nine o'clock, for his coffee, tea, and sugar; at noon, for the starch with which he powdered his hair; at dinner, for his salt; in the evening, for his porter; all day long, for his light; and at night, for his candles.[1] A glance over the statute book, or at the police reports of the eighteenth century, illustrates curiously the great difference between its industrial system and our own. Thus a law of George I., passed in the interest of the silk manufacturers, prohibited anyone from wearing buttons and button-holes made of cloth or other stuff, and as late as 1796 a law was passed at the request of the makers of metal buttons prescribing the proportion of gilt, double gilt, and triple gilt buttons, and prohibiting the mixture of buttons of different qualities.[2] I have already cited the law which long made it penal for any woman to wear a dress made of Indian calico. In 1766 a lady was fined 200*l.* at the Guild Hall because it was proved that her handkerchief was of French cambric.[3] In the same year an attorney named Brecknock, who had been sent to prison by the House of Lords for publishing a book called the 'Droit du Roi,' avenged himself upon Lord Camden by laying an information before Judge Fielding, that the Chief Justice and three other judges wore cambric bands in court, contrary to the Act of Parliament.[4] The laws

[1] *Ann. Register*, 1769, p. 86.

[2] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 118, iv. 373.

[3] *Annual Register*, 1766, p. 53.

[4] See on this curious case the *Bedford Correspondence*, iii. 339. Walpole's *George III.* i. 383, 384. Brecknock was afterwards

against usury were frequently enforced, and they forbade the exaction of any interest higher than five per cent. All contracts for taking higher interest were not only void, but were punished by the lender forfeiting treble the amount borrowed.[1] The offence of 'owling,' or transporting English wool or sheep to foreign countries, was treated with especial severity, as it was supposed to assist the rival woollen manufactures of the Continent, and the penalties against this offence rose to seven years' transportation.

Penalties but little less severe were enacted against those who exported machines employed in the chief English industries, or who induced artificers to emigrate; and any skilled workman who carried his industry to a foreign market, if he did not return within six months, after being warned by the English ambassador, was declared an alien, forfeited all his goods, and became incapable of receiving any legacy or gift. General warrants, without specifying names, were especially employed as a means of detaining such workmen when they were preparing to emigrate, and there were complaints that the condemnation of these warrants during the Wilkes case, by facilitating the emigration, had a prejudicial influence on English industry.[2] At home the law of settlement effectually prevented the labourer from carrying his labour to the most profitable market. The poor law secured him an ultimate support in the parish in which he was settled, but it also gave the parochial authorities an almost unlimited power of preventing a new labourer from establishing

hanged in Ireland as an accessory to the murder for which fighting Fitzgerald was condemned.

[1] Blackstone, bk. iv. ch. xii. In the *Annual Register* for 1772, p. 116, there is a case of a usurer punished for exacting only 10 per cent. A man in Surrey was fined 1,500*l.* for lending to two young ladies at 20 per cent. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1773, p. 194.

[2] Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, pp. 508–511.

himself in the parish and of forcibly removing poor men if they seemed likely to become chargeable on the rates.

This last power, as we have seen, was modified towards the close of the century, and the system of regulation, though still in our eyes extravagantly excessive, had greatly diminished. Though particular Acts still regulated wages in particular trades or places, the old system of determining all wages either by general laws or by particular orders of the justices of the peace in each county, had fallen into complete desuetude. The regulation of profits, by fixing the price of provisions and other goods, was now only retained in the case of bread, the assize of which continued till 1815, when it was abolished in London, and appears to have become obsolete in other parts of the kingdom.[1] Among the ancient restrictions on free trade in provisions, were a crowd of laws which were still sometimes put in force against 'Badgers,' 'Engrossers,' 'Forestallers,' and 'Regrators,' terms which denoted different classes of speculators, who, foreseeing a coming dearness, and desiring to regulate prices or monopolise the market, bought up large quantities of provisions before they came to market, or at an early period of the market, in order to sell them again at an enhanced price. Most of these laws were repealed in 1772,[2] and Burke appears to have taken the leading part in their abolition.[3] The provisions of the statute of Elizabeth relating to apprentices and journeymen were suffered to fall into general neglect; special Acts were passed in 1777 re-

[1] See *Wealth of Nations*, bk. i. ch. x. Wade's *Hist. of the Working and Middle Classes*, p. 101.

[2] 12 George III. c. 71. Blackstone, bk. iv. ch. xii. Blackstone says, however, that some of these Acts were still offences by common law. According to Sir J. Stephen, forestalling and regrating were still punishable under laws older than Ed. VI. which were only repealed in 1844. *Hist. of the Criminal Law*, iii. 201.

[3] *Parl. Hist.* xxvi. 1169.

lieving particular trades from similar restrictions,[1] and under the commercial treaties, which were so frequent during the eighteenth century, some steps were taken in the direction of free trade. The transition of industry from small establishments to vast factories, the wholly new conditions on which its success depended, and the magnitude and power which the different industrial classes assumed, made the regulations of Elizabeth and of the Stuarts altogether impracticable, and they at last led to the great measures of 1814 and 1824, which repealed the Apprentice Act and a number of other old laws preventing workmen from combining or from emigrating, regulating the rate of wages, the hours of work, and the manner of conducting any business or manufacture. Nearly at the same time the most important of the great exclusive commercial companies were abolished or thrown open.[2]

It is worthy of notice that this vast and rapid emancipation of industry from the restrictions which mediæval and Tudor legislation had imposed upon it was effected by a Tory Government, and at a time when Toryism was completely in the ascendant in Parliament. It was partly due to the force of the new circumstances which industrial inventions had produced, and partly also to the general intellectual influences of the time. The first form that political economy assumed was a conviction that all Government interference with industry was an evil. 'Laisser faire, laisser passer,' was the favourite maxim of Quesnay and his school, and, as we have seen, they combined the most unflinching advocacy of commercial freedom with a strong political leaning towards despotism. Fénelon in his 'Telemachus' had already advocated complete liberty

[1] Macpherson, iii. 607, 608.

[2] See Cunningham's *Politics and Economics*, pp. 80, 81.

of commerce;[1] but what with him was a passing intuition of genius, with the economists was an essential part of a great and well-reasoned system. The English economists adopted the same view, and it was adopted also for other reasons by the more advanced Democrats. The restriction of government within the narrowest limits was in their eyes the condition, and indeed the very definition of liberty, and in this respect they were totally opposed to the authoritative democracy of Rousseau and of his later followers. 'All government,' wrote Price, 'even within a State, becomes tyrannical as far as it is a needless and wanton exercise of power, or is carried further than is absolutely necessary to preserve the peace or to secure the safety of the State. This is what an excellent writer calls "governing too much."'[2] 'Government,' wrote Godwin, 'can have no more than two legitimate purposes, the suppression of injustice against individuals within the community, and defence against external invasion.'[3]

Among those who did not belong to the Radical school, a great distrust of Government interference with industry was also shown. It appears in the writings of Hume and Tucker, both of whom were decided Tories. 'Our policy,' wrote Arthur Young, 'is weak beyond all doubt, because it consists of prohibiting the natural course of things. All restrictive, forcible measures in domestic policy are bad.'[4] Burke, as we have seen, by no means sympathised with the prevailing Whig doctrine that Government should exercise little or no coercive influence in the sphere of religion, but in industrial matters his leaning was consistently on the side of liberty. In that great speech on American taxation which he made in the earlier phase of his

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[1] Livre iii.
[2] Price *On Civil Liberty*, p. 72.
[3] *Political Justice*, ii. 190.
[4] *Political Arithmetic*, p. 95.

career, he complained that 'Mr. Grenville thought better of the wisdom and power of human legislation than in truth it deserves. He conceived, and many conceived along with him, that the flourishing trade of this country was greatly owing to law and institution, and not quite so much to liberty,' and, in one of the last tracts he ever wrote, Burke pointed out that the leading vice of the French monarchy had been a 'restless desire of governing too much. The hand of authority was seen in everything and in every place.' 'My opinion,' he concluded, 'is against an overdoing of any sort of administration, and more especially against this most momentous of all meddling on the part of authority, the meddling with the subsistence of the people.'[1]

But by far the most powerful intellectual influence in this direction was that of Adam Smith, whose views on commercial matters soon acquired a paramount authority over the best English minds. It is one of the signal proofs of his genius that, though some of his doctrines have not stood the test of time, his great work in its method and its spirit is more akin to nineteenth-century thought than the most eminent of its successors. Unlike Ricardo, and unlike the great school of economists that followed Ricardo, Adam Smith did not treat political economy as a chain of absolute and almost mathematical reasoning, to be evolved *à priori*, and with little or no relation to the fluctuating and diversified conditions of societies. His work is perhaps the best example in literature of the union of history with philosophy, and he showed the true judgment of a statesman in recognising exceptions and limitations to his most cherished principles. Thus, while no previous writer had written so powerfully in favour of the restriction of the sphere of government,

[1] *Thoughts on Scarcity.*

he at the same time contended that the education of the people was a task which it was the duty of Government to undertake; that a school should be established in every parish, where children may be taught at so moderate a cost that even a common labourer may afford it; that it should be partly but not wholly paid by the public, and that the Government may in this way encourage and even impose upon almost the whole body of the people the necessity of acquiring the most essential parts of education. In spite of his strong sense of the value of machinery in industry, he has pointed out with the greatest fullness, and even with some exaggeration, the tendency of the excessive division of labour it produces, to narrow both the intellect and the character. In the same way his central doctrine of free trade is largely qualified. He warmly eulogised the navigation laws on the ground of political expediency, and he justified protective laws in favour of native industry as measures of retaliation against foreign nations which impose restrictions on our imports; as measures of self-preservation, securing to a nation a constant supply of everything that is necessary for the national defence, and as measures of equalisation when the products of foreigners are burdened with lower taxes than our own.

But in spite of these exceptions, his book is essentially one long indictment against Government interference with industry, either in the form of restriction or in the form of encouragement. As Dugald Stewart has truly said, it was its main object 'to demonstrate that the most effectual plan for advancing a people to greatness is to maintain that order of things which Nature has pointed out; by allowing every man, as long as he observes the rules of justice, to pursue his own interest in his own way, and to bring both his industry and his capital into the freest competition with those of his

fellow-citizens.' Restrictive duties, prohibitions and bounties, by which Legislatures have endeavoured to force industries into particular channels, are alike condemned, as well as all attempts to regulate private expenses by sumptuary laws. The natural effort of each man to improve his own position, when exerted with freedom and security, is represented as the mainspring of national progress. Every nation and individual, in the judgment of Adam Smith, is directly interested in the prosperity of others; their jealousies spring mainly from ignorance; and whatever lowers the cost of the products which a nation requires is equivalent to an increase in the national wealth. The corollary from these propositions is, that the largest possible latitude should be given to industry and competition. The legitimate functions of Government, Smith maintains, may all be summed up under three heads: (1) to protect the society from the attacks of other nations, (2) to secure each member of the society from the injustice or ill-will of other members, (3) to erect and maintain certain establishments of public utility which are of such a nature that it would never be the particular interest of an individual, or the interest of a small number of persons, to construct them.

Such was the order of ideas which for more than a generation presided over and mainly formed the character of English Liberalism. It was a robust, healthy, and self-reliant type, extremely jealous of all extensions of Government interference, extremely tenacious of individual liberty, and habitually preferring spontaneous activity, even when wasteful and ill-regulated, to the disciplined action of a controlling power. Many circumstances, however, have contributed gradually to change it, and it is certain that the problem of the legitimate sphere of Government action is a much more complex and difficult one than it appeared to the writers

of the eighteenth century. All political rules are dependent on the special circumstances, conditions, and character of the people for whom they are intended. The political art is essentially an art of adaptation; it admits of very few general terms, and the course which is suited for one stage of society is wholly unsuited for another. There are societies of scattered farmers like the Boers in South Africa for whom scarcely any government is needed. In crowded and highly organised societies the work that must be accomplished by the community is far larger, but there is an enormous difference in different nations in the amount of spontaneous energy which they produce. Let anyone compare from this point of view the great communities of North America with those of South America; or European with Asiatic nations; or Great Britain with Ireland and with most of the nations of the Continent; and he can hardly fail to be struck with the absurdity of supposing that the sphere of Government initiative and control can be defined for all of them by the same rules. Much of this difference has its root in the deep and obscure field of national character, and much also is due to particular circumstances and especially to the distribution of wealth. When there is a large, intelligent, and energetic middle class; when the spirit of speculation is strongly developed; when there is a high standard of public spirit; and when wealth is so agglomerated that there are many persons who possess either habitually or occasionally incomes much larger than their wants, a crowd of enterprises will be undertaken which are of the highest value to the community, but which only offer to the investor the prospect of doubtful, small, or postponed returns. In countries where these conditions do not exist, such works will never be undertaken without the initiative and support of the Government.

In England the great development of manufactures broke the trammels of the mediæval system of industry, and led the way to the triumph of free trade, but it also prepared the way for a new reaction in the direction of Government interference. Adam Smith judged correctly in connecting the question of national education with that of manufactures. The experience of the nineteenth century has abundantly shown that no nation can hold its own in the great competition of the world without a high standard of education, and that such a standard cannot possibly be attained without a large measure of Government direction and assistance. Hence this vast field of activity, which was formerly left to individual initiative or to ecclesiastical organisations, has become one of the chief preoccupations of statesmen, and over the greater part of Europe immense sums are compulsorily raised in order to establish efficient education under the direct control and superintendence of the State. The Factory Laws marked a second great step in the extension of Government influence—important in itself, but still more important as a precedent. It was found that simple competition occasioned the employment of women and children in a manner that ruined their health; that the overcrowded factory might become a seedplot of immorality; that a permanent lowering of the physical as well as moral standard of a vast section of the population was to be feared, and that great political dangers might grow out of moral evils. Hence sprang a long series of legislative interferences with industry, wholly repugnant to the *laisser faire* philosophy. The progress of medicine, again, showed that some deadly and contagious diseases could be successfully combated by the universal imposition of certain practices or rules. Hence compulsory vaccination, and the growing sense of the extreme importance of extensive Government measures of sanitary inspection and

reform, and experience has conclusively established the enormous saving of human life which can by these means be effected. In a smaller circle the invention of railways had a similar effect, for it was found absolutely necessary to regulate this form of locomotion to a much greater extent than the older forms.

In this manner department after department of human affairs has been gradually drawn to an increased extent into the sphere of Government superintendence and control. But many other and very various influences have been tending in the same direction. The greatly increased sensitiveness of philanthropy which characterises our century, and the immense extension of the newspaper press, have together brought into clear and vivid relief vast numbers of miseries, wants, and possibilities of improvement, which in former years had been unknown or unrealised, and it becomes the natural impulse of multitudes to seek an immediate remedy in Government interference. The impulse is especially natural, and also especially dangerous, because, in the balance of advantages and disadvantages resulting from such a course, the former appeal very powerfully, and the latter most inadequately, to the imagination. Men realise vividly the magnitude of the evil to be combated. They realise vividly the improvement when that evil seems to have suddenly ceased; but they do not realise the impossibility of effecting permanent improvements without changing the characters and desires of men; the danger of weakening by successive acts of interference the spirit of responsibility and self-reliance; the danger of premature and ill-considered reforms producing other evils more grave than those which are remedied; the pressure of the increased taxation, which increased Government superintendence imposes over a wide area of struggling and productive industry; the fatal tendency of every act of

interference to become a precedent, and to reproduce itself in further encroachments on individual action. With the great transfer of power to uninstructed democracies the impulse towards Government interference has naturally increased. Plausible and superficial advantages, which are susceptible of a popular treatment, weigh much more on the minds of such men than remote, indirect, and possibly obscure dangers, and, as Aristotle long since pointed out, the demagogue finds his easiest path to power in incitements to class warfare, and promises of class benefits through the compulsory action of Government. It must be added, too, that when once the empire of habit and tradition is broken, and that of popular discussion is extended, the reproductive character of a precedent or a principle is greatly increased. In earlier periods of English history measures of a socialistic tendency, like the English Poor Law, might exist for generations as isolated and perhaps beneficial anomalies. In active democracies the desire to unify and assimilate the type of legislation is much stronger; principles are quickly pushed to their extreme consequences, and one measure of State interference is tolerably sure to become a point of departure, and the basis of many others.

In all these ways the tendency to enlarge the sphere of Government acquires an accelerated force. On the Continent that great augmentation of standing armies which has been so conspicuous a feature of the present century has strengthened the bias in favour of strongly organised and disciplined government; and the laws of equal succession, which have been so generally adopted, are not only themselves a signal instance of legislative interference with the social type, but also, by their tendency to level fortunes, make Government initiative more necessary. In England the notion has greatly extended of regarding Government as a machine for

securing co-operative effort, for unifying, organising, and concentrating the action of the community for many different purposes, and the large number of public men who have been formed and influenced by the experience of Indian life has had a similar effect.

Under all these influences, the tendency which prevailed in the latter half of the eighteenth century has been not only checked but reversed. The old jealousy of Government interference, and of encroachments on individual liberty, and the old disposition to rely on individual action rather than Government assistance, have both manifestly diminished, and the pendulum of opinion sways once more in the direction of authority. Compulsory regulations have, within the last twenty or thirty years, multiplied to a startling degree in the statute book. The immense increase of the burden of taxation is largely due to the many additional functions which Government has assumed. The modern system of placing the credit of the State, in the form of large loans at low interest, at the service of particular classes, seems likely to have a very wide extension, and much of the Irish legislation of the last few years has been as irreconcilable with the principles of Adam Smith, with modern notions of private property, and with the respect for contracts, as any part of the legislation of the Tudors.

I do not here undertake to judge these measures. What I have written is intended merely to point out the change of tendency, since the closing years of the eighteenth century. There was then much less desire for Government interference and compulsion. There was also much less sensitiveness to the great evils of the time. Of this latter fact the almost unchanged condition of the penal code is a sufficient proof.

I have devoted some pages, in a former volume,[1] to

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 134–137.

the penal system of the eighteenth century, and the barbarities and absurdities which were there described were not seriously diminished before its close. The fact will appear supremely shameful when we remember that the reform of penal codes had on the Continent been one of the special themes of writers upon politics, and one of the capital achievements of the great generation of reforming monarchs and statesmen that preceded the French Revolution. The atrocity and almost grotesque absurdity of the English penal code grew out of certain inveterate traditions of English legislation. Penal laws, enacted often in a remote antiquity and under circumstances that have wholly vanished, have been constantly allowed to remain unrepealed, though they have become obsolete and nearly forgotten, and later generations, without revoking them, have made new laws against the same crimes. Nothing is more common than to find, in consequence, that the same crimes may be prosecuted under totally different penalties. At last a generation arises who consider acts that had once been deemed heinously criminal either innocent or venial, and a law is passed repealing a great mass of ancient legislation that condemned them. The historian will naturally assume that they had become legal; but he will constantly find, on more careful examination, that an act which had been formally freed from a crowd of penalties, still remains an offence by common law, or by some ancient statute which had not been included in the list of those which were repealed; and occasionally, and at long intervals, penal laws which had been regarded as wholly obsolete were put in force.

This utter want of method and symmetry in English legislation, this extravagant multiplication of statutes bearing upon the same act, this difference between the theory and the practice of the law, constitutes one of the chief difficulties of an English historian, and we have had

many examples of it in the present work. Another class of laws had acquired a great additional severity by the lapse of time. Legislators had endeavoured to protect property by punishing with death those who stole a sum of money which in their time was considerable, and the penalty was retained when the change in the value of money had made that sum insignificant. In this way, as an old lawyer forcibly complained, 'While everything else had risen in its nominal value and become dearer, the life of man had continually grown cheaper.' It was also the constant practice of Parliament in the eighteenth century, when new offences arose or when old offences assumed a new prominence, to pass special Acts making them capital. Hence an enormous and undigested multiplication of capital offences, which soon made the criminal code a mere sanguinary chaos. Previous to the Revolution the number in the statute book is said not to have exceeded fifty. During the reign of George II. sixty-three new ones were added. In 1770 the number was estimated in Parliament at one hundred and fifty-four,[1] but by Blackstone at one hundred and sixty; and Romilly, in a pamphlet which he wrote in 1786, observed that in the sixteen years since the appearance of Blackstone's Commentaries it had considerably increased.

A few illustrations will sufficiently show the extravagant absurdity of the code. Thus, to steal a sheep or a horse; to snatch a man's property out of his hands and run away with it; to steal to the amount of forty shillings in a dwelling-house, or to the amount of five shillings 'privately' in a shop; to pick a man's pocket of any greater sum than twelve pence; to steal linen from a bleaching ground, and woollen cloth from a tenter ground; to cut down trees in a garden or in an

[1] *Cavendish Debates*, ii. 12.

orchard; to break the border of a fishpond so that the fish may escape, were all crimes punishable with death. On the other hand, it was not a capital offence for a man to attempt the life of his father; to commit premeditated perjury, even when the result was the execution of an innocent man; to stab a man, however severely, provided the victim did not die from the wound; to burn a house in which the incendiary had a lease, even though it was so situated as to endanger the lives of hundreds. It was a capital offence to steal goods to the amount of forty shillings from a vessel on a navigable river, but not from a vessel on a canal. To steal fruit ready gathered was a felony. To gather it and steal it was only a trespass. To break a pane of glass at five in the afternoon for the purpose of stealing something that lay in the window was a capital offence. To break open a house with every circumstance of violence in summer, at four o'clock in the morning, was only a misdemeanour. To steal goods from a shop, if the thief happened to be seen to take them, was punishable by transportation. To steal the same goods 'privately,' that is to say when the criminal was not seen, was punishable with death. In one case a servant was put on his trial who had attempted to murder his master, and had given him fifteen wounds with a hatchet. He was executed, not as an attempted murderer, but as a burglar, because he had been obliged to lift up the latch of his master's door in order to enter his chamber. In another case a man of notoriously bad character, after going through a course of burglary and larceny with impunity, was at last convicted and executed for cutting down young trees.[1] The

[1] I have taken these illustrations chiefly from a valuable tract of Romilly, called *Observations on a late Publication, entitled 'Thoughts on Executive Justice'* (London, 1786). The work commented on was by Madan, a well-known leader in the Evangelical movement. See, too, a speech of Mackintosh, *Parl. Debates*, New

only difference in punishment by which the law of England distinguished the most atrocious murder from the theft of five shillings, was that in the first case, under a law of George II., the execution of the criminal was to take place within forty-eight hours of his conviction, and his body was to be anatomised.

A natural result of such laws was the constant perjury of juries. Unwilling to convict culprits for small offences which were made punishable by death, they frequently acquitted in the face of the clearest evidence; and, as witnesses in these cases were also very reluctant to appear, criminals—among whom the gambling spirit is strongly developed—generally preferred to be tried for a capital offence rather than for misdemeanour. Often, too, juries, when unwilling to acquit, reduced the offence by the most barefaced perjury to the rank of a misdemeanour. Thus, several cases are recorded, in which prisoners, indicted for stealing from dwelling-houses, were convicted only of larceny, by the jury finding that the value of what they had stolen was less than forty shillings, even when several guineas in gold, or bank notes to a considerable amount, were among the booty that was taken.[1] The proportion of arrested men who were either discharged on account of prosecutors and witnesses failing to appear against them, or acquitted on account of the reluctance of juries to condemn, or of

Series, i. 232. Lord Russell *On the Constitution*, ch. xxiv. *A Treatise on the Police, by a Magistrate for the Counties of Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Essex* (Colquhoun), pp. 284–286. Disparities of punishment almost equally great may be found in cases which were not capital. Thus (to give but a single example) two persons were whipped round Covent Garden in 1772, pursuant of sentence, the one for stealing a bunch of radishes, the other for debauching and polluting his own niece. (*Annual Register*, 1772, p. 116.)

[1] See some curious cases of this kind cited in Romilly's *Observations on the Criminal Law of England* (1810), pp. 65–67; Grose's *Olio*, pp. 259, 261; and Lord Russell *On the Constitution*

the legal rule that the smallest technical flaw invalidated an indictment, was enormously great. Thus, in the four years before 1795, no less than 5,592 persons who had been committed for trial were discharged by proclamation and gaol deliveries, and 2,962 others were acquitted.[1] In one year from April 1793 to March 1794, 1,060 persons were tried at the Old Bailey, and of these only 493 were punished.[2]

The executions, though scandalously numerous, bore but a small proportion to the convictions, but the statistics that are preserved on the subject are too fragmentary for a complete statement. Sir Stephen Janssen, who was Chamberlain for London, preserved a full list of the capital convictions at the Old Bailey during the twenty-three years from 1749 to 1772. The number of persons condemned to death in those years was 1,121. The number of executions was 678. In the Norfolk and Midland circuits between 1750 and 1772, 952 persons were sentenced to death, but the proportion of executions was much smaller than in London, for only 233 persons were executed. Four hundred and sixty-seven persons were executed in London and Middlesex alone in the twelve years from December 1771 to December 1783.[3] In 1785 not less than 96 persons were hanged at the Old Bailey.[4] In Scotland capital punishments seem to have been much more sparingly administered. Between January 1768 and May 1782,

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[1] *Colquhoun on the Police of the Metropolis* (3rd ed.), pp. 90, 91. See, too, on the proportion of discharges to offenders, pp. 225–231. This writer, who was an active London magistrate, states that, owing to the conscientious scruples of multitudes to prosecute delinquents for inconsiderable thefts which were liable to capital punishment, 'it is believed that not one depredation in a hundred of those actually committed, comes to the knowledge of magistrates' (p. 260).

[2] Ibid. pp. 292–294.

[3] *Howard on Prisons*, pp. 479–485.

[4] *Annual Register*, 1785, p. 247.

only 76 persons were condemned and 54 executed.[1] In the Dutch Republic, where the standard of order and good government was at least as high as in any part of Europe, Howard found an instructive contrast to the English system. In all the seven provinces together there were seldom more executions in a year than from four to six. In the great city of Amsterdam, which was about a third of the size of London, and contained 250,000 inhabitants, he found that in the eight years before his arrival only five persons had been executed.[2]

There is nothing more scandalous in the history of England in the eighteenth century than the neglect by legislators and statesmen of these abuses. Burke was indeed in this, as in many other respects, an exception to the spirit of his time. He strongly urged the necessity of revising the penal code. He described it, certainly without exaggeration, as 'radically defective' and 'abominable,' and he seems to have made it his practice to oppose steadily the multiplication of capital offences.[3] But in general English statesmen paid no attention to such matters, and when the great task of softening the penal code was undertaken in the early years of the nineteenth century, the leading lawyers bitterly opposed it. In Parliament the enactment of new capital offences appears to have been left almost exclusively to a few lawyers. There were no debates which excited less interest, which were less attended or worse reported. Burke used to relate that being stopped one night when leaving the House of Commons, and requested by the Clerk at the table to stay to make a house, he asked what was the business in question, and was answered, 'Oh, sir, it is only a new capital felony!'[4]

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[1] Howard, p. 485.
[2] Ibid. pp. 45, 56.
[3] See *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 146.
[4] Lord Russell *On the Constitution*, c. xxiv. Romilly's *Observations on a late Publication entitled 'Thoughts on Executive Justice,'* p. 45.

Outside Parliament, Paley, in a well-known passage of his 'Moral Philosophy,' justified the English system on the ground that it swept into the net every crime which under any possible circumstances could deserve death, leaving it to the executive to single out for condign punishment such cases as presented particular features of danger or aggravation.

But although in the latter years of the century only a very small proportion of capital sentences for the lighter offences were carried into effect, the English penal code in its actual enforcement was probably the most sanguinary in Europe, while it was totally wanting in that element of certainty, which, as Beccaria truly said, is the most essential in a penal code. The profuse distribution of the penalty of death not only multiplied enormously chances of acquittal, but also deprived secondary punishments for capital offences of most of their deterrent power, for the imaginations of men were naturally much more impressed by the escape of a criminal from the gallows than by the fate which subsequently awaited him. In London and Middlesex, criminals after sentence were all remitted to the gaol, where they remained in suspense about their fate till the Recorder had made his report to the King in Council, when, perhaps, a third part were removed for execution. In the other parts of England the judges directly, and of their own authority, reprieved the criminals, and their sentences were then invariably commuted.[1] Different judges, as might be expected,

[1] *Thoughts on Executive Justice* (Madan), pp. 98–101. Colquhoun, in 1785, said: 'According to the present system, out of about 100 who are upon an average every year doomed to suffer the punishment of death, four-fifths or more are generally pardoned, either on condition of being transported, or of going into his Majesty's service, and not seldom without any condition at all' (*Police of the Metropolis*, p. 294). From August 1792 to June 1794, 1,002 pardons, absolute or conditional, were granted (p. 296).

differed considerably in their severity, and much depended on the general character of the criminal, and even on his demeanour in the dock. One writer, near the close of the century, mentions that he was present when a girl of twenty-two was hanged for receiving a piece of check from an accomplice who had stolen it. Such crimes were at this time scarcely ever capitally punished, but the poor girl had unfortunately drunk too freely before the trial, and was insolent in the dock. The prosecutor, a simple, honest man, who had no idea that such a punishment would be inflicted, was driven almost distracted by remorse, and did not long survive the shock.

The improvements in the penal system during the last half of the century were few and slight. I have already mentioned the repeal of the laws condemning prisoners who refused to plead to be pressed to death, and all gipsies to be hanged, and the substitution in 1790 of the gallows for the stake, in the capital punishment of women. I have noticed also the disgusting scene of ribaldry and profanity which habitually took place when the criminal was carried, for more than two miles, through the most crowded thoroughfares in London, from Newgate to Tyburn. So brutal and brutalising a spectacle could be seen in no other capital in Europe, nor could any be conceived more fitted to harden a dying criminal, to make him, if reckless and unrepentant, the hero of the mob, and to deprive his execution of every element of solemnity. It is a curious illustration of the caprice of national sentiment, that English opinion in the eighteenth century allowed the execution of criminals to be treated as a popular amusement, but at the same time revolted against the continental custom of compelling chained prisoners to work in public, as utterly inconsistent with English liberty. The scandal of English executions was not wholly re-

moved till our own day, but it was one of the few good measures of the Coalition Ministry of 1783 that it abolished the procession to Tyburn, and criminals were from that date executed in front of the gaol.[1] A serious improvement was at the same time made in the manner of execution by the introduction of the drop. Previous to this time the punishment by hanging was a very unequal one, and the death in some cases very lingering. The French traveller Misson mentions the horrible fact that the relations and friends of a criminal often themselves laid hold on his legs when he was hanging, in order to put him out of his agony. The drop is said to have been first used at the execution of Lord Ferrers in 1760, but it does not appear to have come into general use till 1783, when the London executions were removed from Tyburn to Newgate.[2]

The senseless and savage rule which deprived prisoners accused of any capital offence, except treason, of the assistance of counsel, unless some question of law arose which it was necessary to discuss, had been slightly relaxed. Even Blackstone, who regarded the criminal law of his country with the characteristic complacency of an English lawyer, acknowledged that there was no plausible reason why the same assistance should not be granted to a poor, ignorant, and terror-stricken prisoner, in cases affecting his life, as in cases of petty trespass; and he ventured timidly to hint that this 'seems to be not all of a piece with the rest of the humane treatment of prisoners by the English law.'[3]

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[1] Johnson expressed his great indignation at this change, declaring that the age 'was running mad after innovation,' and that even Tyburn was not safe from it. Boswell's *Johnson* (Croker's ed.), p. 720.

[2] See an interesting letter on the history of the drop in the Croker *Correspondence*, iii. 15, 16. *Annual Register*, 1760, p. 45.

[3] See the whole of the curious passage, book iv. ch. xxvii.

By the permission of the judges, however, in trials for felony a counsel now usually stood beside the prisoner, instructed him what questions to ask, and even himself cross-examined the witnesses, though he might not address the judge or jury unless a legal question had arisen.[1]

It appears still to have been the rule that criminal trials should be compressed into a single day. Whether this haste was due to a consideration for the juries, or to the professional interest of the lawyers, may be a matter of dispute. In the more lucrative branches of the profession no such hurry was shown. Civil suits, and especially suits in Chancery, were often protracted for years, and sometimes even for generations, by merciless legal subtleties, and in this way countless fortunes were engulfed, and countless hearts were broken. But in those less lucrative cases in which only a human life was pending, evidence was often hurried through with indecent haste, or sittings were so prolonged that neither judges nor jurymen can have been fit to discharge their duty. The impartiality and the dignity of English judges have been rarely questioned since the Revolution, but an English criminal trial was probably far from being as decorous a thing in the eighteenth century as in our own day. A writer in 1785, whose leanings were all on the side of severity towards criminals, has left us the following picture: 'A cause of much evil,' he says, 'is the trying prisoners after dinner, when from the morning's adjournment all parties have retired to a hearty meal, which at assize time is commonly attended, among the middling and lower ranks of people at least, with a good deal of drink. . . . Drunkenness is too frequently apparent where it ought

[1] Blackstone, book iv. ch. xxvii. Compare Sir J. Stephen's *History of the Criminal Law*, i. 424.

of all things to be avoided. I mean in jurymen and witnesses. The heat of the court, joined to the fumes of the liquor, has laid many an honest juryman into a calm and profound sleep, and sometimes it has been no small trouble for his fellows to jog him into the verdict, even where a wretch's life has depended on the event. This I myself have seen—as also witnesses by no means in a proper situation to give their evidence.'[1]

The American war put an end to the sale of criminals for terms of years to American planters. This system originated during the Restoration,[2] was revived in 1718, and continued with excellent results for the next fifty-six years. Healthy agricultural labour, pursued under rigid discipline and amid totally new associations, proved a great school of reformation, and many convicts, after their term had expired, became farmers and planters on their own account, and rose to respectability, and sometimes to wealth. Skilful thieves, who formed a large proportion of them, had generally good natural abilities, and their labour proved so useful in Maryland, where they were chiefly sent, that, for some years before the beginning of the American war, contracts were made to convey them without any expense to Government, which had formerly allowed 5*l.* a head. For some time after the outbreak of the war, there was great difficulty in disposing of convicts. The gaols were soon overcrowded. A project was formed for transporting convicts to an island in the Gambia, but it was soon abandoned, and in 1776 an Act was passed for establishing convict hulks. In the space of nineteen years, about eight thousand convicts were divided

[1] *Thoughts on Executive Justice*, pp. 144, 145. The reader will remember Pope's line, 'And wretches hang that jurymen may dine.' See, too, Sir J. Stephen's *History of Criminal Law*, i. 422.

[2] See Sir J. Kelyng's *Reports of Crown Cases in the Time of Charles II.* (ed. 1873), p. 68; 18 Car. II. c. 3.

between an old ship named the 'Justicia,' which was moored at Woolwich, and two others in Langston and Portsmouth harbours.[1] Howard says that out of 632 prisoners on board the 'Justicia,' 116 died within nineteen months.[2] The discoveries of Captain Cook, and the glowing description which his companion Sir Joseph Banks gave of New South Wales, made the English ministers, after a time, resolve to revive the system of transportation, and to make New South Wales the receptacle of their criminals. An Act was passed in 1784 authorising transportation, in the old method, assigning the convicts as servants to the contractor who undertook it. In 1786 and 1787, however, a new system was adopted, and a great penal settlement was established at Botany Bay, under the governorship of Captain Phillip. At a much later period, the Australian colonies naturally and properly resented the introduction into their population of English criminals. But at the time when the settlement was founded, Australia was almost a desert country. Its splendid future was as yet unrealised; convict labour was of no small use in opening its resources; and there is no reason to believe that either in Australia or America the criminal element in the early population has left behind it any permanent moral trace.[3]

There were great abuses in the early convict system in Australia, and especially in the treatment of the female convicts; but on the whole, transportation to this distant and unknown country was probably a more deterrent punishment than imprisonment at home, and the fate of transported convicts was in most respects

[1] Walpole's *Last Journals*, ii. 38. Adolphus, iv. 231. *The Police of the Metropolis*, pp. 299–309.

[2] Howard *On Prisons*, p. 465.

[3] Many particulars about the early convict life in Australia will be found in the singularly interesting little book of Mr. Bonwick, *First Twenty Years of Australia*.

superior. The English gaols, in spite of the strong light which had been thrown on their condition by the parliamentary inquiry of 1729,[1] continued in a state which shows forcibly the extreme corruption that might still exist in departments of English administration, to which public opinion was not turned. The latter half of the century, however, witnessed the labours of John Howard, the greatest of prison reformers, and his untiring efforts, seconded by the Legislature and supported by that great wave of philanthropic enthusiasm which proceeded from the Evangelical movement, gradually effected a complete renovation.

The attention of Howard was first called to the condition of prisoners, in 1756, when on a voyage to Lisbon he was captured by a French privateer and imprisoned at Brest and at Morlaix; but his active mission dates from 1773, when he was appointed High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, and was in that capacity charged with the superintendence of the county gaols. From this time till his death at Cherson in January 1790, his whole life was devoted to a single object, and the researches he made into the condition of prisons in every part of the United Kingdom, as well as in all the principal countries on the Continent, revealed to the world a mass of maladministration and atrocious cruelty which made a deep and lasting impression.

The abuses he discovered were of many kinds. The food in nearly all English prisons was utterly insufficient. The pennyworth, or at most two pennyworths of bread, daily allowed each prisoner, had been originally fixed at a time when corn was nearly twice as cheap as when Howard wrote, and being very frequently farmed out by the gaolers, the amount was constantly diminished. In nearly half the county gaols the debtors, and

[1] See vol. ii. pp. 128–131.

in several bridewells all prisoners, were left without any regular allowance of food, and subsisted on charity. There were often no sewers, no infirmaries, no means of warming the prisons during the winter. In one gaol Howard found but three pints of water a day allowed to each prisoner for both drinking and washing. Prisoners were crowded to excess, for fourteen or fifteen hours of the day, in dark, damp, subterranean dungeons reeking with pestilential effluvia. In many gaols and most bridewells there was no allowance for bedding, or for straw for prisoners to sleep on, and if by any means they procured any, it was not changed for months. Almost all ventilation was stopped in order to escape the window tax. The vileness of the air was such, that Howard declared that after visiting the prisons his clothes were so impregnated that he could not bear to drive in a post-chaise with closed windows, but was obliged to travel on horseback, and even the leaves of his memorandum book were so tainted that he was often unable to use it till he had spread it for an hour or two before the fire. In such an atmosphere, in such a scene of putrescence and filth, human life rapidly withered. Scorbutic diseases multiplied fiercely; mortification in the feet was so deadly that some great contractors for transporting criminals to the colonies complained that the mortality from this source alone almost destroyed their profits; discharged prisoners proved the centres of contagion wherever they went, and the gaol fever raged with such a deadly virulence that Howard computed that every year it carried away far more than perished by the gallows.

There were other evils of a different kind. Many gaols were private property, and the gaolers were in these almost wholly withdrawn from the attention of the magistrates. Many gaolers and turnkeys had no salaries, and lived on the fees extorted from the prisoners,

and on the profits of the prison tap, which was usually in the gaoler's hands. Some kept public-houses, and supplied the richer prisoners with drink. Before the Act of 1774 it was a common thing for acquitted prisoners to be imprisoned for months on account of fees they were unable to pay, and even after that Act there were constant cases of extortion. Many country prisons were in an almost ruinous condition. A gaol at Ely was so dilapidated that for some time it was the custom to secure the prisoners by chaining them on their backs on the floor, with an iron collar and spikes about their necks, and a heavy iron bar over their legs. This case was one of unusual atrocity; but in most country prisons, heavy chains and iron collars were in constant use, though the gaoler was often ready to remove or lighten them for money. In many prisons there were no courtyards, or the courtyards were appropriated by the gaolers, or they were so ruinous and insecure that the prisoners were not allowed to enter them. Much of the support of the prisoners was derived from mendicancy. Gaunt, skinny arms might be seen stretched through the iron bars to receive alms from the passers-by. At Salisbury, Howard found two debtors, daily chained by a staple fixed outside the prison door in order that they might sell nets, purses, and laces made in the prison; and at Christmas felons chained together were permitted to go begging through the town.

In many prisons there was scarcely a semblance of discipline. Lunatics were often confined in them. Friends of prisoners were freely admitted, and allowed to use the prison like a public-house. For those who could pay, drinking and gambling went on with little restraint, and there were frequent instances of gross immorality. When a new prisoner was brought into the Bridewell, he was immediately seized by the other

prisoners, who called for 'garnish' or drink money, and if he was unable to pay he was at once stripped of a great part of his clothes. In most prisons debtors and felons, men and women, young boys or girls fresh to the paths of crime and confined for the most trifling offences, and the oldest and most hardened criminals, habitually mixed together during the whole day, so that the prison became the most deadly and most certain school of vice, and innumerable crimes were planned within its walls. Untried and perhaps innocent men were often exposed for months to its contagion. In some counties the gaol delivery was but once a year. At Hull it was but once in three years. Every year hundreds of persons who had entered the prison-door, either innocent or mere novices in crime, came out of it accomplished criminals, completely and hopelessly depraved, and at the same time shut out from almost all honest means of subsistence.[1]

These few lines may be sufficient to give a general outline of the abuses of English prisons in the early years of George III., but the reader who would form an adequate conception of their magnitude must himself turn to that ghastly procession of detailed evidence, collected from every gaol in the kingdom, which is to be found in the treatise of Howard. A long and searching investigation into the condition of prisons on the Continent completed his task, and it had an importance which is not limited to its immediate subject. Probably the most fruitful as well as the safest method of political and social reform is to be found in a careful comparison of the laws, institutions, and administrative measures by which different nations have endeavoured to solve the same problems, to cure or to diminish the same evils. Of this comparative method the writings of

[1] Howard's *State of Prisons.*

Howard form one of the earliest and best examples. They illustrate vividly one side of the moral history of Europe, and they at the same time furnish painful proofs of the fragmentary and unequal character of European civilisation. There were no doubt prisons in Germany and Italy, in the bishopric of Liège and in Russia, which were even more horrible than any in England. Though torture had been in general abolished or disused throughout Europe, Howard still found it regularly employed at Osnabrück, Hanover, Munich, Hamburg and Liège, and in Austrian Flanders, and he found recent traces of it in some other quarters. Death by breaking on the wheel was not unusual. An executioner in Russia acknowledged to him that slow death by the knout was often in that country deliberately inflicted. But on the whole, England, which stood so high among the nations of the world in political, industrial, and intellectual eminence, ranked in most matters relating to the treatment of criminals shamefully below the average of the Continent. Nowhere else were the executions so numerous. Nowhere else were they conducted with such revolting indecency, and in scarcely any other country were the abuses in prisons so gross, so general, and so demoralising.

Prison reform had already attracted some attention on the Continent. It had formed part of the great series of reforms which had been carried out by Leopold in Tuscany. In Austrian Flanders, Houses of Correction had lately been erected which filled Howard with admiration, and Count Vilain XIV. had done much to anticipate his work. Imprisonment for debt had been abolished in Portugal in 1774, and in many other countries it was carefully limited and regulated. In the Dutch Republic, institutions, both for the correction and reformation of prisoners, had been brought to almost the highest perfection; nearly every important

prison reform of the nineteenth century appears to have been anticipated, and Howard found in the Dutch prisons and Rasphouses not only a model of all he desired, but also a conclusive proof of the efficacy of such methods in diminishing crime. In Switzerland a physician, much concerned in prison management, assured him that the gaol fever which was so inveterate in English gaols was absolutely unknown, and he added that he believed it to exist nowhere but in England. Howard acknowledged that he found no trace of it on the Continent, not even in Russia and Italy, where there were some of the worst prisons in Europe. There had been, it is true, a terrible outbreak of scurvy in the Paris prisons, but improved regulations had completely checked it, and although prisons in the French provinces were very bad, those in Paris were now admirably managed.

The special evils of English prisons were evils of administration, largely due to the position of the gaolers. There was an old law of Charles II. ordering the separation of debtors from felons.[1] An Act of George II. had forbidden under stringent penalties the introduction of spirituous liquor into workhouses or gaols, and another Act, which was called the 'Lords' Act' because it originated in the House of Lords, and which became the basis of much subsequent legislation, among many other provisions obliged the creditors of imprisoned debtors to provide four pence a day for their support.[2] These Acts, however, were systematically violated. In 1773, the year in which Howard began his mission, a member of Parliament named Popham brought forward the abuses relating to gaolers' fees, and tried unsuccessfully to carry a Bill throwing them on the county rates, and in the same year a beneficent Act was passed

[1] 23 Charles II. c. 20. [2] 24 Geo. II. c. 40. 32 Geo. II. c. 28.

appointing for the first time regular chaplains for the county gaols of England.[1] In the following year Howard gave evidence, before a parliamentary committee, about the condition of some fifty prisons which he had visited, and received the thanks of the House, and in that year two very important Acts were passed. One of them provided in much detail for the cleanliness and ventilation of prisons, and the other condemned the frequent practice of detaining in prison, on account of fees due to sheriffs, gaolers, and keepers of prisons, men against whom no indictment had been brought, or who had been acquitted, and enacted that in such cases fees should no longer be demanded, but that an equivalent sum should be paid out of the county rates.[2] Howard at his own expense sent printed copies of these Acts to every keeper of a county prison in England. Some other measures of slight importance were afterwards taken regulating fees and improving the condition of insolvent debtors; and Grey supported by Burke made an effort in 1794 to abolish imprisonment for debt.

The treatment of debtors in England was indeed one of the most astonishing instances of the astonishing corruption of English law. 'If a debt exceeds 40*s.*,' wrote a most competent authority in 1795, 'the action may be brought in a superior court, where if contested or defended the expense at the lowest computation must be upwards of 50*l.* . . . at present the rule is to allow the same costs for 40*s.* as for 10,000*l.* It depends only on the length of the pleading, and not on the value of the action.' 'In the county of Middlesex alone,' says the same writer, 'in the year 1793, the number of bailable writs and executions for debts from 10*l.* to 20*l.* amounted to no less than 5,719, and the aggregate amount of the debts sued for was 81,791*l.* It will

[1] 13 Geo. III. c. 58. [2] 14 Geo. III. c. 20, 59.

scarcely be credited, although it is most unquestionably true, that the mere costs of these actions although made up, and not defended at all, would amount to 68,728*l.*—and if defended, the aggregate expense to recover 81,791*l.* must be (strange and incredible as it may appear) no less than 285,950*l.*, being considerably more than three times the amount of the debts sued for.' More than one million of money, in debts of 100*l.* and upwards, was recovered at considerably less than half the expense of 81,791*l.* in debts of from 10*l.* to 20*l.* It is a horrible fact that between six thousand and seven thousand persons were arrested every year on mesne process in Middlesex alone, one-half of whom were for debts under 20*l.* In the kingdom at large the number annually arrested for trifling debts was estimated at not less than forty thousand.[1] It was such men who were exposed during long periods of imprisonment to the intolerable evils of English gaols, and their long imprisonment was usually due much less to their original debts than to the legal expenses that had been heaped upon them. Can it be deemed surprising that many foreigners who valued good administration, public order, and cheap justice more than representative institutions and political liberty, should have preferred their own system to that of England?

Howard, though he was deeply imbued with the very emotional Evangelical piety which was then rising to prominence, was far from being a sentimental reformer. He dwelt strongly on the evils of public executions, and desired capital punishments to be restricted to three or four offences, but he was no advocate for a complete abolition of the punishment of death, and while pointing out the enormous abuses in English gaols, he did not forget—as his successors have sometimes done—

[1] Colquhoun *Police of the Metropolis*, pp. 390–393.

that the diet and treatment of prisoners should always be such as to make imprisonment a deterrent punishment to the most needy, and that hard labour is an essential element in every sound prison system. The task which he and his generation of reformers set before them was chiefly to remedy great positive abuses, but the success with which the reformation of criminals was pursued in Holland gave rise to an Act for the erection of penitentiaries in England,[1] which was carried in 1779, chiefly by the influence of Blackstone. There was, however, much delay in carrying it out, although Pitt clearly saw and stated the importance of discriminating between the different kinds and degrees of criminal character, and averting the contagion of vice produced by the existing prison system.[2] It was not until some years after the death of Howard, that English philanthropy made the reclamation of criminals one of its great objects. In the last years of the eighteenth century, if this end was ever attained, it was probably in most cases through the army and navy. Every year of war many convicts were pardoned on condition of enlisting, and the press gang and the recruiting sergeant brought great numbers of discharged criminals under the stringent and healthy regimen of naval or military discipline.

All attempts to estimate the amount and the fluctuation of crime in the eighteenth century must be extremely vague and unsatisfactory. Accurate statistics on these matters date only from the nineteenth century, and the scandalous imperfection of the police system, and the extravagant severity of the criminal code, secured the escape of a great proportion of criminals. In the first half of the present century, concerning which we

[1] 19 Geo. III. c. 74.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 1224.

have full information, the proportion of convictions to acquittals largely augmented, and the increase in the number of committals was far greater than can be accounted for by the increase of population.[1] Much, however, of this apparent deterioration may no doubt be ascribed to the greater efficiency of the police force, and to a somewhat mitigated and simplified criminal code. On the whole it appears probable that, in the eighteenth century, crimes against the person, and especially murder, diminished, but that large classes of crimes against property increased. I have already collected evidence showing the terrible and long-continued outbreak of crime in London from 1767 to 1771 ;[2] and the distress which was then very widely prevalent, spread similar disorders over the country.[3] Prosecutions under the Game Laws are said to have much multiplied with the growth of enclosures. By the law of England, no one at this time, with a few strictly specified exceptions, was permitted to shoot or fish even on his own grounds, unless he possessed a freehold estate of at least 100*l.* a year, or a leasehold of at least 150*l.* ; the sale of game was absolutely prohibited, and although the penalties of poaching were not so severe as they became under George IV., it was still possible for young men to be publicly whipped for having killed a hare.[4]

Many other forms of crime were naturally increased in the closing years of the century by the great rise in the price of food, and by the great changes and fluctuations of industry. The full and detailed account which Colquhoun has given of the state of crime in London about 1795 shows that large classes of offences against

[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, pp. 645, 653.

[2] Vol. iii. pp. 319–327. See, too, *Parl. Hist.* xvi. 929–942.

[3] See much evidence of this in Phillimore, *Hist. of Geo. III.* pp. 410, 411.

[4] See an instance of this at Reading, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1773, p. 98.

property had attained a terrible magnitude. This able and experienced magistrate speaks of it as an incontestable fact that there was much more crime in proportion to population, and especially much more crime against property, in England than in France, Flanders, Holland, and some other Northern countries,[1] and he ascribes it very largely to the immense proportion of criminals who were either not arrested, or were acquitted though guilty, or were returned to the population, after a short period of imprisonment, totally corrupted and with an almost absolute impossibility of finding any honest means of livelihood. In seven years before a reform in the police establishment, which took place in 1792, no less than 4,262 prisoners, who had been put on their trial at the Old Bailey by the grand juries, were acquitted. Between April 1793 and March 1794 inclusive, 1,060 persons were committed for trial at the Old Bailey, and of these 567 were acquitted and discharged. 'The acquittals,' adds Colquhoun, 'will generally be found to attach mostly to small offences which are punishable with death. Where juries do not consider the crime deserving so severe a punishment, the delinquent receives no punishment at all.'[2]

Colquhoun gives at the same time a very vivid picture of the extreme inefficiency of the watchmen and of the whole police administration. The crimes which he describes as having of late years especially increased were coining, petty forgery, robberies from ships on the Thames, and other offences against property. He states that there were believed to be more than three thousand receivers of stolen goods in London, and an equal proportion all over the country.[3] Public-houses were, next to the prisons, the great schools of crime, and there

[1] *The Police of the Metropolis*, pp. 88, 353.

[2] Ibid. pp. 23, 24, 91, 92, 293.

[3] Ibid. pp. 11, 12.

were no less than 5,204 licensed within the bills of mortality. The complaints of excessive drunkenness do not appear to have been as great as in the earlier half of the century, but Colquhoun has made one remark about public-houses which appears to me of much significance. 'The period,' he says, 'is not too remote to be recollected, when it was thought a disgrace for a woman (excepting on holiday occasions) to be seen in the taproom of a public-house; but of late years the obloquy has lost its effect, and the public taprooms of many alehouses are filled with men, women, and children, on all occasions.' [1]

Probably the most important measure for the suppression of crime during the period we are considering, was an Act which was passed in 1773 making it possible for felons and other malefactors who escaped from England to Scotland or from Scotland to England to be arrested in either country and sent back to the place where their offences were committed.[2] This measure, which had been so long and so strangely delayed, completed the union between the two countries, diminished greatly the chances of the escape of criminals, and was especially useful in improving the condition of the border, which had been for generations a centre of anarchy and crime.

The roads were still scandalously insecure, and the English highwayman was a striking and conspicuous figure through the whole of the eighteenth century. William IV. was accustomed to relate how his great-grandfather George II., when walking alone in Kensington Gardens, was robbed by a single highwayman who climbed over the wall, and pleading his great distress, and with a manner of much deference, deprived

[1] *The Police of the Metropolis*, pp. 34, 35.
[2] 13 Geo. III. c. 31.

the King of his purse, his watch, and his buckles.[1] Even in the most central parts of London, highway robberies were not unfrequent. Thus, George IV., when Prince of Wales, and the Duke of York were robbed on Hay Hill near Berkeley Square. Two daughters of Admiral Holborn were driving across St. James's Square on their return from the opera, when a single footpad stopped their carriage and carried off their watches and jewels. The Neapolitan Ambassador, though two footmen stood behind his carriage, was stopped in Grosvenor Square and robbed of his watch and money, and Walpole describes a similar robbery in Piccadilly within fifty yards of his own house. On the mail coaches arms were constantly carried for protection, and there are numerous accounts of men who were shot when attacking them. The roads in the immediate neighbourhood of London were infested with highwaymen, and solitary and unarmed travellers rarely ventured after nightfall to traverse Hounslow Heath, or Blackheath, or Clapham or Finchley Common. At Kensington, as late as the beginning of the present century, it was customary on Sunday evenings to ring a bell at intervals, in order that the pleasure seekers from London might assemble in sufficient numbers to return in safety. The Angel Inn at Islington was a favourite resting place of timid travellers to London who arrived towards the evening, while the braver assembled near the end of John Street, where, when a sufficient number had collected, an armed patrol was appointed to escort them across the dangerous space that separated them from the great City. Men of business settled at Norwood and at Dulwich, when they returned from London after business hours, used to appoint a place of rendezvous from which they proceeded in a body for mutual protection, and it was found neces-

[1] Greville's *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Victoria*, ii. 215.

sary to protect the roads leading to the public gardens by patrols of horse.[1]

The English highwaymen were an altogether different class from the savage and half-famished brigands who found a refuge in the forests of Germany and among the mountains of Italy and Spain. They were in general singularly free from ferocity, and a considerable proportion of them were not habitual criminals. Broken tradesmen, and even young men of position, who had ruined themselves by dissipation, not unfrequently went upon the road, and if they escaped detection returned again to respectable life. On one occasion a London print cutter, on the road to Enfield, was stopped by a single highwayman whom he recognised as a tradesman in the City. He addressed him by his name, and the detected robber at once blew out his own brains. Favourite actors and other popular heroes, when stopped by highwaymen, were sometimes allowed to pass unmolested as soon as they were recognised; and if the robbed person asked for sufficient money to continue his journey, the request was generally granted. Few things in English life appeared more strange and more scandalous to foreigners than the extraordinary insecurity of the roads around the English capital, although there were neither mountains nor great woods to give shelter to robbers. They ascribed it to the want of that mounted police called the 'Maréchaussée' which protected the French roads; to the forms of English freedom which made it difficult or impossible to arrest men on suspicion and to demand their papers, and especially to the extreme severity of

[1] For many particulars about the highwaymen of the eighteenth century, see Andrews' *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 228–246. Walker's *The Original*, pp. 40, 41. Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 641. See, too, the numerous cases referred to in the index of the *Annual Register*, under the head 'Robbery.'

the penal code which discouraged informers and induced juries to avail themselves of any pretext to acquit criminals.[1]

Another prevalent form of violence, which in the eyes of the law was a crime of the deepest turpitude, was duelling. Few facts in the moral history of Europe are more curious than the stringency with which the practice was enforced by public opinion, in Catholic countries and in ages when faith was almost unchallenged and when all heterodoxy was suppressed by law, although the Church had pronounced it to be a sin of that 'mortal' kind which excludes from heaven. In England, if the Church did not profess to speak in as authoritative language as Catholicism, the law at least recognised no distinction between the killing of a man in a duel and premeditated murder, and the seconds as well as the principals were involved in the guilt. The Star Chamber had made special efforts to suppress duelling, and Bacon was conspicuously opposed to it, but in general judges and juries seem to have combined to shield the culprits, and there was as yet little or no sign of a turn of opinion. In France, it is true, both Voltaire and Rousseau wrote strongly against duelling, and the downfall of feudalism at the Revolution probably accelerated its fall. In England, Paley, and also the Evangelical leaders, strongly condemned it, but the practice, in some cases, was so stringently enforced by opinion that the most serious moralists hesitated. Dr. Johnson maintained that in the existing state of opinion a man who fought a duel to avoid a stigma on his honour, was only exercising his legitimate right of self-defence.[2] Bentham used very similar language, though

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[1] See an interesting chapter on this subject in *L'Angleterre au Commencement du XIX^e^ siècle*, par le Duc de Levis, ch. iii.

[2] Croker's *Boswell*, pp. 239, 240, 254, 728.

he pointed out with great force the evils and absurdities of duels, and ascribed their prevalence to the deficiency of legislation, which had provided no adequate means for the protection of honour.[1] Wilberforce himself, was on one occasion challenged by a West Indian captain, and he mentions that Stephen, who was one of the ablest men in the early Evangelical party, confessed to him that his 'strongest temptations were to duelling.'[2]

On the occasion of Pitt's duel with Tierney in 1798, Wilberforce desired to bring the subject before the House of Commons in the form of a resolution, but he found that he could not count upon more than five or six members to support him, and accordingly relinquished his intention.[3] The immense number of conspicuous men, and especially of conspicuous statesmen, who fought duels during the eighteenth century is very striking. We have already had occasion to notice as considerable political events the duels of Lord Mohun with the Duke of Hamilton; of Wilkes with Martin; of the Duke of York with Colonel Lennox, and of Whately with Temple. Among the Prime Ministers of George III. Shelburne fought with Colonel Fullerton, Pitt with Tierney, and Fox with Adam; and at a later period, Canning fought with Castlereagh, the Duke of Wellington fought with Lord Winchilsea, and Peel twice challenged political opponents. These are but a few out of many examples that might be given. No revolution of public sentiment has been more remarkable than that which in the space of little more than a generation has completely banished from England, and largely diminished throughout Europe, this evil custom which had so long defied the condemnation both of the Church and of the Law.

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[1] *Traité de Législation*, ii. 342–351.
[2] *Wilberforce's Life*, i. 356, ii. 93.
[3] Ibid. i. 280–284.

It is impossible, I think, to trace the history of crime, of the treatment of criminals, of the treatment of debtors, and of the maintenance of order, without acknowledging the enormous improvement which has in these fields, at least, been effected in England, as in most other countries, since the eighteenth century. The tone of life and manners has become indisputably gentler and more humane, and men recoil with a new energy of repulsion from brutality, violence, and wrong. It is difficult to measure the change that must have passed over the public mind since the days when the lunatics in Bedlam were constantly spoken of as one of the sights of London; when the maintenance of the African slave trade was a foremost object of English commercial policy; when men and even women were publicly whipped through the streets; when skulls lined the top of Temple Bar, and rotting corpses hung on gibbets along the Edgware Road; when prisoners exposed in the pillory not unfrequently died through the ill-usage of the mob, and when the procession every six weeks of condemned criminals to Tyburn was one of the great festivals of London. A similar change is shown in the abolition of the old modes of recruiting for the army and navy; in the character of public amusements; in the treatment of boys at school; in the attention that is paid in the houses of the rich to the comfort and health of their servants. Improved roads, improved police, and improved legislation have altogether extirpated some forms of crime and greatly diminished others. The wholesale cattle stealing of the Highlands, highway robbery, piracy and kidnapping, are now things of the past. Smuggling, which once educated hundreds, if not thousands, into systematic lawlessness, has sunk into insignificant dimensions. Riots have become comparatively rare and inconsiderable. If theological fanaticism burns in some quarters more fiercely than in

the eighteenth century, intolerance at least finds no longer any sanction in English law, and the circle of permissible discussion recognised by public opinion has been immensely enlarged. In the upper classes duelling has disappeared; drunkenness has become very rare; gambling, though it has probably greatly increased in the form of reckless and dishonest speculation, has in other respects declined, and the canons of good society have diminished coarseness, and banished profane swearing from conversation.

All these signs of improvement are incontestable, but in nearly all these respects the latter part of the century was greatly superior to the beginning. In other forms of morals the comparison is more dubious. Towards the close of the century especially, there were loud complaints of growing vice in high quarters. The many conspicuous scandals in the royal family; the public relations of the Duke of Grafton, when Prime Minister, with Nancy Parsons; the passion at one period for masquerades and at another period for ballet dancing, and above all the growing number of divorces, were cited as illustrations. Bills for preventing the intermarriage of the offending parties were carried through the House of Lords in 1771 and in 1779, but on both occasions rejected by the Commons.[1] A Bishop of Durham in 1798 gravely assured the House of Lords that the French, despairing of overthrowing England by arms, had formed a deliberate and subtle design to corrupt her morals, and had for that purpose sent over a number of ballet dancers.[2] Lord Auckland noticed in 1800, that in the space of 130 years there had been 132 divorces by Act of Parliament. Of these only eight had taken place in the first forty-five years, fifty in the next sixty years, and seventy-four in the last twenty-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 227.

[2] Ibid. xxxiii. 1307.

five years. In the four years immediately preceding the Session in which he spoke, twenty-nine divorce bills had been carried and five others rejected.[1]

Evidence, however, of this kind appears to me to be of very little value. Each generation has its censors who pronounce it to be altogether extraordinary in its depravity, and these denunciations are sometimes even a sign of progress, for they merely show that men are more conscious of the evils around them; have raised their standard of excellence, and have learned to lay an increased stress upon moral improvement. This was very eminently the case at the close of the last century when the Methodist and Evangelical movements were at their height. In the 'Practical Piety' of Wilberforce; in two short treatises of Hannah More, and in some of the essays of Vicesimus Knox we have the views of leading Evangelicals on the morals of the upper classes; and while they sufficiently show that those classes were far from conforming to the Evangelical standard, they do not furnish any real proof of deterioration. The mere coincidence of a few great scandals is often purely fortuitous, and the number of divorces is certainly no sure index of the morals of society. It is a notorious fact that the lowest standard of domestic morality in Europe may often be found in countries, and in periods, in which divorce was absolutely forbidden, or in classes in which it never takes place; nor is there, I believe, any real reason to think that the standard of domestic morals in England has been lowered by the great multiplication of divorces which has followed the Divorce Law of 1857. In this case the multiplication has been the obvious consequence of a law which made a process, which before was extremely difficult and extremely expensive, both easy and cheap. But where no change in

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 244.

the law has been effected, it would be very rash to infer that a public opinion which acquiesces placidly in conjugal infidelity, or which condemns the victims of unhappy marriages to lifelong misery and sin, is of a higher order than a public opinion which in such cases permits and encourages divorce. In the eighteenth century the practice in England relating to it was incredibly absurd. All matrimonial cases were placed under the Ecclesiastical Courts, and the law of England, following the doctrine of Catholicism and the canon law, pronounced that while separation 'a mensâ et thoro' might in some cases be permitted, an absolute dissolution of a valid and duly accomplished marriage, was in all cases a sin against God. And from this position the singular inference was drawn, that it should only be permitted by special Act of Parliament, and at the cost of several thousand pounds. The fact that the small class of persons who were able and willing to resort to this remedy had increased is surely no considerable index of growing depravity, and it may be much more than balanced by the immense improvement in the marriage relation which was effected by the Act of Lord Hardwicke, suppressing or diminishing the enormous abuses of clandestine marriages.

At the same time, it is certain, that in this field of morals there has been no improvement at all commensurate with that which has taken place in the field of philanthropy, and it is probable that the tendency has been in the opposite direction. This class of vices naturally increases with the increased luxury of a wealthy society, with the larger place which town life holds in the existence of the wealthy, and especially with the increasingly cosmopolitan character which European society has assumed. It is possible also, that it may have been more largely affected than other departments of morals, by that decline of theological

beliefs which was so manifest in the closing years of the eighteenth century, and which is certainly not less apparent in our own day.

The distinctive virtues of the eighteenth century were not those which spring from passionate or definite religious convictions. For these we must look rather to the two centuries that preceded it. In its closing years, it is true, the Methodist and Evangelical movements, and the strong conflicting passions aroused by the French Revolution, somewhat altered its character; but in general it was an unimpassioned and unheroic age, singularly devoid of both religious and political enthusiasm, and much more remarkable for intellectual than for high moral achievements. It was pre-eminently a century of good sense; of sobriety of thought and action; of growing toleration and humanity; of declining superstition; of rapidly extending knowledge; of great hopefulness about the future. In England, we must add to these characteristics a steady national progress; a free and temperate government; a constantly increasing respect for law; a remarkable absence of class warfare, and of great political and religious convulsions.

The reforming spirit was, however, much weaker than at present, and that extreme activity of the philanthropic spirit, which is so characteristic of modern English life, had but just begun. This spirit has been largely stimulated by the Evangelical revival; by the great development of the press, which has brought into vivid relief innumerable forms of long unnoticed suffering, and also, perhaps, by the democratic movement which has forced the wants of the humbler classes into attention. In comparing, however, from this point of view, the England of the last century with that of our own day, it is necessary to remember that during the greater part of the eighteenth century, society was so

organised that the demand for charitable and philanthropic exertions was considerably less than it now is. Before the existing industrial system had grown up, and before the vast agglomerations of population in the great towns, industry in all its branches was much less fluctuating than at present, and the permanent relation between classes was closer and more stable. The country gentleman lived nearly the whole year among his people. A great proportion of the agricultural labourers lived in the houses of the farmers. The common land and the plot of ground, which, in the early years of the century, still surrounded the married labourer's cottage, preserved him from the extremes of want. The poor law system was lavishly administered, and the obstacles which the law of settlement put in the way of the migration of the agricultural poor, stereotyped the features of English country life. The price of corn till near the close of the century was low and steady. Extreme want was rare, and the standard of comfort was low. Manufacturing industry was, to a large extent, a mere adjunct of agriculture, carried on in cottages scattered through the agricultural districts. In the towns, the apprentice system; the long contracts between the master and his journeymen; the habit of apprentices, and often journeymen, living under the roof of their master, and the settlement of wages by law, which was not yet extinct, mitigated the fluctuations of industry. The population was also comparatively small, and English industry was much less closely connected than at present with the vast and complex vicissitudes of foreign markets.

Legislation concerned itself much less than in our day with social abuses. The prevention of crime, and the regulation of commercial interests, were sedulously, if not always wisely, attended to; but there were few attempts during the Hanoverian period to deal with special evils and forms of suffering among the poor, and

in spite of occasional laws relating to gaming, lotteries, disorderly houses, and the observance of Sunday, there was in general little disposition to regulate habits, and restrain private vices, by law. The greater portion of the legislation directly bearing on the condition of the poor consisted of extensions, restrictions, and modifications of the poor law. Numerous measures were passed during this period, defining the nature and conditions of relief; the circumstances by which a parish settlement might be lost or gained; the power of churchwardens and overseers to hire out, with the assent of two justices of the peace, pauper children, till they were twenty-one, as 'parish apprentices.'[1] A disclosure of the appalling mortality among young children in the London workhouses was met by a merciful Act, which appears to have been principally due to Hanway, establishing separate nurseries in the country for these children.[2] Some great evils, which had been discovered in private madhouses, and some striking instances of persons improperly confined, produced much scandal, a parliamentary inquiry, and some careful legislation,[3] and another law endeavoured to put an end to horrible abuses which had grown up in the treatment of children who were employed to sweep chimneys.[4] I have already mentioned the laws for regulating wages and hours of work; for improving the condition of prisons, and for alleviating the state of debtors; and there are a few instances of new forms of charity being assisted by moderate and temporary parliamentary grants.

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[1] The laws relating to the poor have been collected in two volumes by Cunningham Glen. On the parish apprentices, see especially 18 Geo. III. c. 47, 20 Geo. III. c. 36, 32 Geo. III. c. 57.

[2] 7 Geo. III. c. 39. Pugh's *Life of Hanway*, p. 190.

[3] *Parl. Hist.* xv. 1283–1291. Walpole's *Geo. III.* i. 244. 14 Geo. III. c. 49. 26 Geo. III. c. 91. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1772, pp. 195, 196, 340, 341, 589, 590; 1773, p. 99.

[4] 28 Geo. III. c. 48.

But on the whole this class of subjects occupies a very small place in the legislation of the eighteenth century, though a great amount of private benevolence was devoted to it. The London charities were large and excellent, and an intelligent French traveller, who carefully investigated them in the early years of the present century, was especially struck with their complete independence of the Government, and with the very large proportion of them which had grown up during the latter half of the eighteenth century.[1] A detailed examination would, I believe, show that London already ranked very high, in its charitable institutions, among the cities of the world.[2] Two important, though by no means uncontested, forms of charity, which had already existed on the Continent, appear to have arisen in England for the first time in the eighteenth century. The first foundling hospital in England was established through the exertions of Captain Coram in 1739, and the first Magdalen Asylum in 1769. In addition to the foundling hospitals and orphanages which already

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[1] De Levis, *L'Angleterre au commencement du dix-neuvième siècle*, ch. viii.

[2] See Seymour's *Survey of London*, and a full catalogue of the London charitable institutions with the dates of their foundation in Colquhoun's *Police of the Metropolis*, pp. 374–380. Colquhoun, in 1795, estimates the poor rates for the metropolis (including an adjoining district of Middlesex and Surrey) at 245,000*l.* a year. In addition to this, he estimates the annual expense of

1. Supporting charity schools for educating the poor at . £10,000
2. Asylums for the relief of objects of charity and humanity, supported by annual contributions, at . £25,000
3. Asylums, hospitals, and dispensaries, for the sick, lame, diseased, and afflicted, at 50,000
4. Institutions for benevolent, charitable, and humane purposes, 704 societies, at 120,000
5. Private charities at . 150,000
6. Endowed establishments at 150,000

Total estimate per annum, 750,000*l.*

existed, some attempts were made in the latter half of the century to purify the sources of crime by asylums for deserted girls, young delinquents, and children of criminal parents, and by a society, founded by Hanway, for collecting destitute boys from the street in order to educate them as sailors. A society for the relief of persons confined for small debts was founded in 1772, and in the work of improving the condition of prisoners, its treasurer, James Neild, deserves to rank only second to Howard.[1] There were numerous instances of large subscriptions raised for special purposes of benevolence, such as providing comforts for prisoners of war, or for soldiers and their families, and these subscriptions had sometimes a very cosmopolitan character. Large sums were raised from private sources in England to assist the Corsicans in their struggle with the French, and the Poles in their struggle with the Russians.[2] There was a subscription for the destitute Portuguese after the earthquake at Lisbon, and in the beginning of the French Revolution more than seventy thousand pounds were subscribed for the assistance of French refugees.

Charities of this description do not appear to me to have been to any considerable extent due to the religious revival at the close of the century. There had always been much unobtrusive charity in England, and causes in a great degree independent of religion had contributed to stimulate it. There are fashions of feeling as well as fashions of thought, and with the softening manners of the closing years of the century, benevolence and philanthropy had undoubtedly acquired a higher place in the category of virtues. It was the complaint of a hostile critic, that Fielding had set the fashion of reducing all virtue to good affections in con-

[1] Nichols's *Illustrations of the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 689–706.

[2] See a speech of Fox, *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 171.

tradiction to moral obligation and a sense of duty, and of representing goodness of heart as a sufficient substitute for moral virtues.[1] The ideal of excellence which was taught by Shaftesbury in England, and by Voltaire in France, and the strain of sentiment which was at once sustained and reflected by the writings of Rousseau, was very apparent in English life; and Evangelical writers, so far from denying the strong spirit of benevolence outside their sect, were inclined to reproach their contemporaries with the exclusive and excessive stress they laid upon that virtue.[2] There was, however, a large class of institutions which were distinctly traceable to the religious revival. The Evangelical party, though it as yet only included a minority of the clergy, and was not largely represented among the higher clergy, had already drawn to itself the strongest religious enthusiasm in the nation, and had become the pre-eminent source

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[1] Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 215. See, too, a remarkable essay 'On Novel Reading,' by Vicesimus Knox, *Essays*, i. No. xiv.

[2] Thus Hannah More says that the age in which she wrote was pre-eminently 'the age of benevolence.' 'Liberality flows with a full tide through a thousand channels. There is scarcely a newspaper but records some meeting of men of fortune for the most salutary purposes. The noble and numberless structures for the relief of distress which are the ornament and glory of our metropolis, proclaim a species of munificence unknown to former ages. Subscriptions, not only to hospitals, but to various other valuable institutions, are obtained almost as soon as solicited.' But she at the same time asks 'whether it be not the fashion rather to consider benevolence as a substitute for Christianity, than as an evidence of it?' And she adds: 'It seems to be one of the reigning errors among the better sort to reduce all religion into benevolence, and all benevolence into almsgiving.' *On the Religion of the Fashionable World*, Works, xi. 87–91. She has, also, some good remarks upon the way in which the restriction of 'That broad shade of protection, patronage, and maintenance, which the widespread bounty of their forefathers stretched out over whole villages,' and the 'general alteration of habits and manners,' had recently increased the necessities for charity.

of religious activity. In the older religious societies it had little weight, but nearly all the popular religious literature of the time, nearly every fresh departure, nearly every new organisation which grew up in the English religious world, was mainly due to it.

The largest of them were of a purely religious character, with which we have no concern here. Thus the London Missionary Society, which was established in 1795; the Church Missionary Society, which was established in 1799; the Religious Tract Society, which was established in the same year, and which followed in the steps of a tract society that had been founded by Wesley seventeen years before; the British and Foreign Bible Society, which was established in 1802, and all, or nearly all, the Nonconformist religious societies which arose about this period, were distinctly Evangelical. The Society for the Reformation of Manners, imitated from the society of the same name which had existed at the close of the seventeenth century, was not indeed an Evangelical society, but it owed its origin to Wilberforce; and the Association for Securing a Better Observance of Sunday consisted chiefly of Evangelical members. But in almost all forms of purely secular charity, a new impulse was also given; and a characteristic feature of English life in the closing years of the century, was the increasing number of persons—especially unmarried women—who were making works of charity the main business of their lives. 'There is no class of persons,' Wilberforce once said, 'whose condition has been more improved within my recollection than that of unmarried women. Formerly there seemed to be nothing useful in which they could be naturally busy, but now they may always find an object in attending to the poor.'[1]

[1] *Wilberforce's Life*, i. 238.

The services of the rising party to religious education were also very considerable. It is a remarkable fact that during the whole of the eighteenth century the task of educating the English poor, as far as it was undertaken at all, was left to the different religious denominations, and to the benevolence of individuals and voluntary associations without the smallest assistance from the Government. The old law which forbade the opening of any school without the licence of a bishop, though still in force, had become obsolete; but if the Government did not impede, it at least did nothing whatever to support education. There were still many endowed schools dating from an earlier period, which gave free education to many children, and there had been, as we have seen, a great and beneficent movement for the erection of parochial charity schools under Anne. It was warmly patronised by the Queen, but it was the work of private charity, entirely unassisted by Parliament; and for more than sixty years after the death of Anne, the history of education in England is almost a blank. Scotland, indeed, and the New England colonies had long enjoyed excellent systems of popular education, and even in Ireland there were the Charter Schools endowed by the Irish Parliament; but in England it was the prevailing doctrine that the education of the people was entirely foreign to the duties of Government, and it was a very common belief that education would only unfit the poor for the life that was allotted to them. New charity schools were no doubt occasionally erected. Private enterprise multiplied cheap schools; landlords occasionally founded schools on their estates, and the apprentice system in some small measure discharged the functions of a system of education; but unless we except the circulating schools in Wales,[1] there is, I believe, during

[1] See vol. iii. p. 105.

this long period, no evidence of any considerable attempt to instruct the poor.

The fact is especially remarkable when we remember how eminently the eighteenth century was a century of extending knowledge, and how large a place education held in the thoughts of legislators on the Continent. As early as 1717, Frederick William I. had issued an edict making education compulsory in Prussia, and not less than seventeen hundred schools for the poor are said to have been established in Prussia during his reign. Frederick the Great energetically pursued the same policy, and some years before the outbreak of the French Revolution, there were laws in almost every little German State, obliging parents to send their children to schools which had been established under the direction of ecclesiastics. Even the Catholic States of Germany, though in general considerably behind the Protestant ones, had thrown themselves ardently into the same career. Maria Theresa through her whole reign made the education of her people one of the great objects of her policy, and Joseph II., though with feebler steps, followed her example. The writings of Rousseau, and, in the last years of the century, the example and system of Pestalozzi, had given an immense impulse to the cause of education throughout the Continent.

But in England this movement appears for a long time to have been entirely unfelt, and the first traces of a revived interest in education seem to be due to the religious movement. A sermon preached at Cambridge by Bishop Porteus in 1768, on the subject of religious education at the Universities, induced a Norfolk gentleman named Norris to found at Cambridge a professorship for giving lectures on the doctrines of revealed religion;[1] while among the poor an important step was taken by the

[1] Hodgson's *Life of Porteus*, pp. 18, 19.

establishment of Sunday schools. Raikes of Gloucester, whose first schools were set up in 1781, is generally spoken of as their originator, but it is certain that there were a few isolated Sunday schools at an earlier date. To Raikes, however, far more than to any other man, the Sunday-school system owes its real importance. Some of the clergy, and among others Bishop Horsley, looked on it with suspicion and dislike, but it spread rapidly, and was especially favoured by the Evangelical party. The Sunday School Society was established in 1785, and two years later, not less than two hundred thousand children are stated to have been receiving instruction in Sunday schools.[1] Wesley strongly advocated them; Hannah More greatly assisted the movement both by her influence and by her pen, and Rowland Hill is said to have been the first to introduce Sunday schools into London.[2]

The establishment of any real system of secular national education in England belongs altogether to the nineteenth century, for although the systems of Bell and Lancaster were brought before the English public in 1797 and 1798, nothing was yet done to put them into action. About the same time, Malthus, following in the steps of Adam Smith, urged in impressive language the extreme national importance of a general system of popular instruction; the scandal and the danger of leaving the education of the lower classes to a few Sunday schools, directed and supported by private individuals.[3] For a long time, however, these warnings were little attended to. The deep and honourable distrust of all encroachments of Government, which was characteristic of Englishmen in the eighteenth century,

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[1] Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, iii. 500.
[2] Sidney's *Life of Rowland Hill*, ch. xx.
[3] *On Population*, bk. iv. ch. viii.

has produced many advantages, but often at a heavy price. Part of that price has been that England until very lately had no system of national education at all comparable with that of many continental nations, or at all worthy of her own place among civilised Powers.

In England, as in the chief nations on the Continent, the closing years of the century were marked by a great widening of the national sympathies, which were no longer confined by the lines of country, race, or creed. The increased sense of wrongs done to savage and pagan races was very evident. The ill-treatment, by the English, of the Caribbees in the island of St. Vincent, was the subject of a parliamentary inquiry and of much discussion in 1773;[1] and the impeachment of Warren Hastings has a great significance in English moral history, as representing the awakening of the national conscience to its responsibility towards subject races. But the most conspicuous illustration of this kind is to be found in that great movement for the abolition of the slave trade, which became, in the last years of the century, one of the chief forms of English philanthropy.

The more important facts in the early history of slavery and of the British slave trade have been already related,[2] and they are in themselves sufficient to show the vast revolution which has been effected in English public sentiment. A few voices had indeed been heard from a very early period protesting against the trade. Even in the seventeenth century, George Fox, the founder of Quakerism; Richard Baxter; Morgan Godwyn, a clergyman of the Established Church; and one or two other writers had denounced it; and Aphra Behn, who had herself witnessed slavery in the West Indies, had brought the wrongs of the negroes before the public in

[1] Walpole's *Last Journals*, i. 176–183.
[2] Vol. ii. pp. 242–249.

a novel called 'Oronooko,' which was afterwards turned into a play by Southern. In the following century, many English writers had dwelt on the barbarity of the slave trade before any serious effort had been made to restrain it. Defoe condemned it in some powerful lines in his poem on 'The Reformation of Manners,' which appeared in 1702, and he afterwards urged a more humane treatment of negroes in his 'Life of Colonel Jacque.' Thomson, Savage, and Shenstone among poets; Heylin, Warburton, and Paley among divines; Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and Beattie among philosophers, may all be cited as early enemies of the slave trade, and a few books of travels had already described its horrors. But in the sphere of politics no such reprobation was shown, and the generation that applauded the conquests of Chatham, as well as the generation that made the Peace of Utrecht, considered the extension of the slave trade a capital object of English commercial policy. The Assiento Treaty, in the reign of Anne, had given England the monopoly of the slave trade to the Spanish colonies, and it was a boast of Chatham, that his conquests in Africa had placed almost the whole slave trade in English hands.[1]

An Act of 1750 had already elaborately regulated the trade. Its preamble described it as very advantageous to Great Britain, and as necessary to her colonies, but it is a remarkable fact that it contained a clause expressly providing for the security of the natives. 'No master of a ship,' it said, 'shall, by fraud, force, or violence, or by any other indirect practice whatsoever, take on board or carry away from the coast of Africa any negro or native of that country, or commit, or suffer to be committed, any violence on the natives to the prejudice of the said trade; and every person so offend-

[1] Walpole's *Geo. III.* i. 227, 228.

ing shall, for every such offence, forfeit 100*l.*'[1] As might have been expected, and as subsequent inquiries abundantly proved, these words proved a mockery and a dead letter, but they show that although the slave trade was uniformly conducted with the most barefaced violence and fraud, the existence of some duty to the natives was at least recognised by the legislators. In 1768, a few years after the war of Chatham, it was estimated that not less than 97,000 negroes were taken from Africa in a single year.[2]

The signs, however, of a growing awakening to the evils of the trade were rapidly multiplied, and in a few years before the outbreak of the American war some important facts had occurred. A controversy which had long been pending, relating to the legality of the state of servitude in England, was at this time finally decided. Numerous slaves had been, in the course of the century, brought to England, held in servitude in England, stopped by force when they left their masters, and even publicly advertised for sale. York and Talbot, the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General in 1729, had given it as their opinion that a slave, by being brought from the West Indies into Great Britain, was not emancipated, but might be legally compelled to return to the plantations. This doctrine, however, had been frequently disputed, and especially by Granville Sharp, one of the earliest and most illustrious of that long line of philanthropists who have devoted their lives to the defence of the negroes. At last, in 1772, the case of an African slave named Somerset, who had been brought to England, had left his master, and had afterwards been forcibly seized for the purpose of being carried out of the kingdom and sold in Jamaica, was

[1] 23 Geo. II. c. 31.

[2] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 484.

brought before Lord Mansfield, and that great judge, after long deliberation, decided that Somerset must be discharged, and that every slave, as soon as he touched English ground, acquired his freedom.

Two other facts of great moment speedily followed. John Wesley, who had come in personal contact with American slaves as early as 1736,[1] published, in 1774, his 'Thoughts on Slavery,' strongly denouncing the system; and two years later David Hartley, the son of the metaphysician, for the first time brought the question before Parliament, by moving a resolution 'that the slave trade was contrary to the laws of God and the rights of man.' The motion was seconded by Sir George Savile, but it was easily defeated, and it appears to have excited little attention.

Up to this time the steadiest and most persistent opponents of the slave trade had been the Quakers. They had passed resolutions condemning it in 1727 and in 1758. In 1761 they excluded from membership, any Quaker who was concerned in the trade, and in 1763 they branded as criminal all who in any way encouraged or abetted it. In America, however, the Quakers were less inflexible in their opposition, and they appear to have in general kept slaves like their fellow-colonists, though they were remarkable for the humanity with which they treated them and the frequency with which they emancipated them. They in general distinguished between the possession and the importation of slaves, but there were always some among them who considered the whole system of slavery criminal, and a strong movement in favour of abolition sprang up a few years before the revolutionary contest

[1] His brother, Charles Wesley, had during this journey formed a very strong opinion of the extreme barbarities inflicted on slaves in the Carolinas. See a striking passage from his journal in Grahame's *History of the United States*, iii. 422.

with England, chiefly in the Quaker province of Pennsylvania.[1] In 1754, in 1755, in 1774 and in 1776, the subject was brought forward at their yearly meetings, and in general the American Quakers seem to have made it their rule to abstain from importing or purchasing slaves, though they did not absolutely condemn the keeping of slaves.[2] About 1770 a few Quakers began to form associations in the middle provinces of North America to discourage the introduction of slaves into their neighbourhood and to encourage manumission, and it was noticed that several persons of different creeds began to liberate their slaves, and to co-operate for the purpose of ameliorating their lot.[3] Benjamin Franklin, among others, warmly supported the movement.

As I have already observed, conditions of climate, and therefore of cultivation, ultimately determined the course of negro slavery in America, and while in the Northern States and in Pennsylvania slaves were few, manumission frequent, and the laws relating to negroes comparatively mild, the slave codes of Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas were of extreme ferocity,[4] and instances of glaring and extraordinary inhumanity to negroes were very numerous in the Southern colonies, and the English West Indies.[5] The grotesque absurdity

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[1] Grahame's *History of the United States*, iii. 404. Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, i. 112–116, 132–180. Kalm's *Travels in North America*, Pinkerton, xvii. 501.

[2] See Clarkson, i. 143–145.

[3] Ibid. pp. 185–192.

[4] An excellent summary of the laws on slavery in the different colonies will be found in Mr. H. C. Lodge's *Short History of the English Colonies in America* (1882).

[5] Many instances of the atrocious barbarities practised on slaves in the American colonies and in the English West India Islands, will be found in Benezet's *Historical Account of Guinea and of the Slave Trade*. Grahame's *History of the United States*, iii. 422, 423. 'The negroes in our colonies,' said Burke, 'endure a slavery more complete, and attended with far worse circumstances, than what any people in their condition suffer in

of slave owners signing a 'Declaration of Independence' which asserted the inalienable right of every man to liberty and equality was not unfelt, but the original draft of the Declaration of Independence as drawn up by Jefferson contained a passage strongly censuring the slave trade, and blaming the King of England for having forced it upon America. By the desire of some of the Southern representatives, this passage was expunged.

Dean Tucker, in a pamphlet published in 1785, has devoted some remarkable pages to the English slave trade. No man living, he says, could sincerely approve of the slave trade as it is actually conducted, and he declares that 'the murders committed in the course of it, reckoning from the beginning of it to the present hour, almost exceed the power of numbers to ascertain. Yet,' he continues, 'reason and humanity recoil in vain. For the trade in human blood is still carried on not only with impunity but also with the consent, approbation, and even assistance of the British Legislature,' and it is never likely to be suppressed, till it is proved that slavery is economically wasteful, and that sugar can be produced more cheaply by free labour. Referring to the state of the slaves, he asserts that it is a notorious and incontrovertible fact 'that the English planters in general (doubtless there are exceptions) treat their slaves, or suffer them to be treated, with a greater degree of inhumanity than the planters of any other

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any other part of the world, or have suffered in any other period of time. Proofs of this are not wanting.' *An Account of the European Settlements in America*, ii. 124. See, too, the whole chapter. Paley says: 'From all that can be learned by the accounts of the people upon the spot, the inordinate authority which the plantation laws confer upon the slaveholder is exercised by the English slaveholder especially, with rigour and brutality.' *Moral Philosophy*, bk. iii. ch. iii.

European nation.' He ascribes this 'excess of barbarity' partly to the fact that the English planters have more slaves than those of any other nation, and therefore think it necessary to protect themselves by a greater severity from combinations or revolts, but partly also to the large amount of self-government the English colonies enjoy. 'The English planters are more their own masters, their own lawgivers in their assemblies; also the interpreters, the judges (as jurymen) and the executioners of their laws, than those of any other nation. The very form of the English Constitution, originally calculated for the preservation of liberty, tends in this instance to destroy it. Consequently the English planters can indulge themselves in a greater degree of passion and revenge than would be permitted under the absolute governments of France, Spain, Portugal, or Denmark.' In proof of this assertion Tucker refers to the Code Noir of France, and he adds: 'The regulations of the Spanish Government respecting negro slaves are still more humane, laying a foundation for the sober and industrious among them, by allowing them the profits of two days' labour in each week, to purchase their own liberty in the course of a few years. And it may be observed in general, that though absolute governments are tyrannical in themselves, yet they are a great check on the tyranny of their intermediate subjects, being ready to protect the helpless from being oppressed by any but themselves. This is remarkably verified in the case of those slaves who live under the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian Governments, compared with the hard fate of others who still groan under the bondage of the nobles of Poland.' In addition to these reasons, he observes that an unusual proportion of English planters lived habitually in England and consigned the care of their property to bailiffs and overseers, who had a manifest interest in stifling all complaints,

and keeping their principals as much as possible in the dark about the management of their estates.[1]

I have already mentioned the attempts that had been made by some American provincial Legislatures, during the colonial period, to discourage the excessive importation of slaves. They appear to have been due mainly or solely to commercial and political reasons, and, as we have seen, were overruled by the British Government. In 1776, however, the Continental Congress passed a memorable resolution, 'that no slaves be imported into any of the thirteen United Colonies.' During the war, the British cruisers very effectually prevented such importation, but, on the attainment of independence, the question was decided independently by the different Legislatures. In the great majority of the States the slave trade was forbidden; but, in spite of the State laws, it was carried on to a considerable extent by New England vessels, and in some of the Southern States it was fully legal. When the Constitution of 1787 was established, there was a long dispute on the subject, and it was finally decided that Georgia and the Carolinas should retain their right of carrying on the slave trade for twenty more years. At this date slavery, as distinguished from the slave trade, had not been actually abolished in any State except Massachusetts; but a measure for its gradual abolition had been adopted in Pennsylvania, and imitated by other Northern States, and there were already active organisations for hastening its abolition, and for alleviating the condition of the slaves.[2]

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[1] Tucker's *Reflections on the present Matters in Dispute between Great Britain and Ireland*, pp. 10–12. At the end of the sixteenth century, Bodin had noticed the good treatment of slaves by the Spaniards, *La République*, liv. i. ch. v.

[2] See Hildreth's *History of the United States*, iii. 509–520, iv. 174, 175.

The British slave trade had been greatly crippled by the war of the American Revolution, and the independence of America cut off permanently one of its great markets. It also very seriously, though indirectly, affected the lot of the negroes in the British West India Islands. The active and profitable commerce which had long subsisted between those islands and the American colonies had been necessarily interrupted by the war, but it was hoped that it might revive on the establishment of peace. The Shelburne Ministry was especially distinguished for its enlightened commercial views, and in March 1783 Pitt, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer, brought before Parliament a singularly liberal Bill repealing all the measures prohibiting American ships from trading with the British dominions, and establishing provisionally, and for a limited time, perfect free trade between the United States and the British Empire. The change of ministry that immediately followed, prevented this measure from being carried; and the Coalition Government which succeeded, contented itself with repealing the prohibitory laws which had existed during the war, and passing a measure, vesting in the Crown for a limited period authority to regulate the commerce with America.[1]

It soon appeared that while the West Indian planters were extremely anxious to reopen free trade with America, a strong opposition to such a policy had grown up. It was desired to confine the trade to these islands to British ships and to the British dominions, and it was contended that by such restrictions the prosperity of Canada, Nova Scotia, and the island of St. John, might be greatly stimulated. Pitt, on returning to power, yielded to the clamour, abandoned the liberal policy of the provisional Bill, consented to refer the

[1] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 17–20. 23 Geo. III. c. 39.

whole matter to the Committee of the Privy Council for the Board of Trade, and at last, on the recommendation of that body, and in spite of the protests and warnings of the planters, he agreed to confine the intercourse between the British West India Islands and America to British ships. The result was a destitution, lasting for many years, and falling especially on the negro population. One or two bad seasons and one or two devastating hurricanes aggravated the calamity, and its magnitude is shown in a ghastly report drawn up by a committee of the Assembly of Jamaica. They express their firm conviction that in seven years, and in consequence of the prohibition of foreign supplies, not less than fifteen thousand negroes had perished. 'This number,' they say, 'we firmly believe to have perished of famine, or of diseases contracted by scanty and unwholesome diet, between the latter end of 1780 and the beginning of 1787.'[1]

The slave trade revived rapidly after the Peace of 1783, and Liverpool became its special source. It has been computed that between 1783 and 1793 not less than 74,000 negroes were annually transported from Africa to the West Indies. Of these it was estimated that Great Britain imported 38,000, Holland 4,000, Portugal 10,000, Denmark 2,000, and France 20,000. It has also been estimated that of the immense number of 814,000 negroes who were carried from Africa to the West Indies in eleven years, not less than 407,000 were carried in Liverpool ships, and that the town derived from this unholy trade an annual profit of about 298,462*l.*[2]

There were, however, increasing signs that the conscience of England was beginning to awaken to the

[1] Bryan Edwards, *History of the West Indies*, bk. vi. ch. iv.

[2] Baines' *History of Liverpool*, p. 719.

enormity of the trade. Granville Sharp with an admirable perseverance continued his efforts, and a peculiarly horrible case that occurred in 1783 did much to arrest the attention of the public. The master of a slave ship, called the 'Zong,' finding sickness raging among his negroes, deliberately ordered 132 of them to be flung into the sea. The pretext alleged was that the supply of water had become insufficient, but this pretext was completely disproved. The real motive was a desire to save the owners, who would bear the cost if the negroes died of sickness, while, if they were thrown overboard for the preservation of the ship, it would fall upon the underwriters. There were two trials with conflicting verdicts, but it was clearly laid down in them that the only question at issue was a question of property or cost; that there was nothing in the transaction of the nature of a murderous act, and that the case was legally of exactly the same kind as if it had been horses and not human beings that had been thrown into the sea.[1]

About this time a small Quaker society was formed for the purpose of influencing public opinion in favour of the abolition of the trade, which it did by disseminating tracts, and through the medium of the provincial press; and in 1783, when a Bill for introducing some regulations into the trade was before Parliament, a Quaker petition for its abolition was presented by Sir Cecil Wray. Lord North in a few words expressed his warm admiration for the Quaker body and his sympathy with the object of their petition, but declared that the trade had become 'in some measure necessary to almost every nation in Europe,' and that 'it would be next to an impossibility to induce them to give it up and re-

[1] Stuart's *Memoir of Granville Sharp*, pp. 29–31. Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, i. 95–97.

nounce it for ever.' A similar petition was presented to Parliament from the town of Bridgewater in 1785, and nearly at the same time some of the most powerful champions of abolition appeared in the field. A clergyman named Ramsay, who had lived for many years in the West India Islands, published in 1784 a work on the treatment of the enslaved negroes which attracted much attention and gave rise to a long and acrimonious controversy. In 1786 Thomas Clarkson began his life-long labours in behalf of the negroes by the publication of his essay on negro slavery. In 1787 Wilberforce agreed to bring the subject before Parliament, and in the same year the 'Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade' was formed in London under the presidency of Granville Sharp.

This society consisted in its origin of only twelve members, most of them being London merchants and the great majority Quakers. Its first business was to define its scope, and the members wisely decided that they would not attempt a crusade against slavery, but would aim only at the abolition of the slave trade and the mitigation of the condition of the negroes.

By adopting this course they greatly diminished the amount of opposition. They avoided the delicate constitutional questions that might be raised if the English Parliament were asked to interfere with the institutions of colonies which had their own legislatures, and they at the same time took a course which was excellently fitted to mitigate the abuses of slavery. The slave trade was in itself a more horrible thing than the simple maintenance of slavery; and by furnishing the plantations with an unlimited supply of cheap and fresh negro labour, it gave slavery its worst features of atrocity. It took away the one serious restraint of self-interest which prevented the extreme ill-treatment of slaves, and it inevitably produced an enormous disproportion between

the sexes, a total destruction of family life, extreme and general dissoluteness.

It was the opinion of Pitt and of a large number of the opponents of the slave trade, that if this trade were abolished colonial slavery would lose its worst characteristics, and that it might at the same time become self-supporting. In North America and also in the Bermudas this had been already achieved, and the result of some measures regulating the condition of negroes in Jamaica appeared to show that if slaves were only compelled to work in moderation, and if family life were duly maintained, the simple increase of population would make the slave trade wholly unnecessary.[1]

The first great work of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, was to collect evidence. Clarkson devoted himself to this task, and the facts collected by him in long and laborious inquiries at Bristol and Liverpool, and afterwards brought before Parliament, revealed a series of horrors which made a deep and lasting impression on the mind and conscience of England. The pretence that the negroes exported from Africa were simply or mainly criminals, was easily dispelled; and the horrible system of kidnapping and of desolating native wars by which the trade was sustained, was abundantly shown.

Not less appalling were the horrors of the Middle Passage, and the terrible mortality that attended it. Though the negroes taken from Africa were chiefly strong men, Wilberforce was able to state before Parliament, that of every hundred carried from Africa, seventeen on an average died in about nine weeks, and not more than fifty lived to become effective labourers in our islands.[2] Many in despair tried to starve themselves to death, and an instrument employed by sur-

[1] See Macpherson, iv. 150.

[2] Clarkson, ii. 52.

geons in cases of lockjaw was in habitual use to defeat their attempts. Others, in spite of all precautions, succeeded in plunging into the sea, and they had been seen flinging up their arms in exultation, and shouting with the triumph of recovered liberty, as they sank beneath the waves. Nor were the abuses of the slave trade confined to the treatment of negroes. The trade had fallen chiefly into the worst hands ; and while it was alleged by its defenders that it was the nursery of British seamen, it was proved beyond all doubt that in no other department of the British Navy was the mortality so great.

While the Committee were engaged in collecting such evidence, the management of the cause of abolition in Parliament was taken up by William Wilberforce, who conducted it to its final triumph, and whose fame has somewhat eclipsed the memory of the minor agents in the movement. A considerable social position, very eminent social gifts, a large fortune, the weight attaching to the representation of the first county in England, and the still greater weight derived from a most intimate friendship with Pitt, at once made the adhesion of Wilberforce to the cause a matter of great moment. He could not be compared in intellectual power with Pitt, Fox, Burke, or Sheridan, but he stood high in the second line of parliamentary debaters. He was quite capable of mastering in its details a vast and complicated subject, and though he seemed the frailest and feeblest of mortals, he could sway great multitudes of excited men by a clear and popular eloquence, and by the exquisite beauty of his voice and his elocution. He had passed completely under the influence of the Evangelical revival, and he showed something of its weakness and narrowness, as well as of its earnestness and strength. The enormity of drilling militiamen on Sunday afternoons in a time of great public danger, or

meeting on that day for recreation or secular instruction, appears to have been in his eyes hardly less than the enormities of the slave trade; and the journals in which he recorded his daily emotions, seem to me to show much of that morbid, exaggerated, and somewhat effeminate self-consciousness, which is the frequent, and indeed the natural, accompaniment, of a constant habit of religious introspection and self-analysis. It would be difficult to speak too highly of the purity and beauty of his career, but something too much has been said of its self-sacrifice. A public man who leads and represents the great religious party of his time, and identifies himself with a small number of conspicuous philanthropic causes; must no doubt sacrifice some of the great prizes of political ambition, but even from a worldly point of view his career is by no means without charm. Of politicians of the same intellectual calibre, very few exercised so wide an influence as Wilberforce. Few, if any, enjoyed so large an amount of contemporary admiration, and not one has been so canonised by posterity. He encountered, it is true, in his career, some measure of obloquy and disappointment, but probably much less than he would have encountered had he taken an equally prominent part in party warfare. His character, however, if it was not exactly of the heroic type, was at least singularly pure, attractive, and unselfish. It was, perhaps, as free from all taint of sordid and unworthy motives, from all envy, jealousy, and bitterness, as any in modern history, and though a very devoted follower of Pitt, he showed on a few occasions in his political conduct a considerable independence of judgment.

The prospects of the cause in 1788 were exceedingly encouraging. Public opinion was strongly and widely moved, and no less than a hundred and three petitions praying for the abolition of the trade were presented to Parliament. The number may not appear great accord-

ing to the measure of our time, but it appears to have been at least double of the number that had ever before, even in periods of greatest popular excitement, been, on any single question, presented to Parliament. Among them were petitions from the Corporation of London, and from most of the other leading Corporations in England and Scotland. Bristol, though only second to Liverpool as a centre of the slave trade, sent up a petition for its abolition; and there was a petition from the Chamber of Commerce in Dublin, expressing their satisfaction that Ireland had been unpolluted by the traffic, and promising that if it were abolished in England, they would do the utmost in their power to prevent it from finding any asylum in the ports of Ireland.[1]

Very important measures were in this year taken to diminish or ameliorate the trade. In February, an Order of Council was issued, directing a Committee of the Privy Council to make a thorough inquiry into its condition and abuses; and as Wilberforce was incapacitated by illness, Pitt himself in May introduced and carried a resolution, pledging the House early in the next session of Parliament to take into consideration the petitions that had been presented. Whether the trade should be abolished, or simply regulated, Pitt said, was a question on which he could give no opinion, pending the inquiry which was going on before the Privy Council. Although there was some objection to the tribunal by which the inquiry was to be conducted, and some doubt about the necessity of postponing legislation, there was very little difference of opinion about the great evils of the existing trade. Fox at once, and in the most explicit terms, declared that his opinion on

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[1] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 141, 154. Clarkson, i. 491, 496. May's *Const. Hist.* i. 447, 448.

the subject was fully determined: that he was convinced that the slave trade ought not to be regulated, but absolutely destroyed. Burke was little less emphatic. His attention had been already for some time directed to the trade, and in 1780 he had even drawn up a code for its mitigation and ultimate abolition, but had abandoned it through a conviction that it would be impossible to carry it.[1] He now spoke strongly to the effect that the trade was one which ought to be totally abolished, but if this was not now possible, it ought to be regulated at once. All delay in such a matter was criminal.[2]

There was no serious opposition. The resolution pledging the House was unanimously passed, and a few weeks later Sir William Dolben introduced a temporary measure to mitigate the horrors of the Middle Passage, of which abundant evidence had been already disclosed. Its chief object was to limit the number of negroes who might be carried in slave ships, by establishing a fixed proportion between the cargo and the tonnage, and a few additional regulations were afterwards introduced into the Bill before it became law. The measure was warmly supported by Pitt, who urged, among other arguments, that there was reason to fear that the prospect of a speedy abolition of the trade might for a time aggravate it, by inducing the slave traders to carry as many slaves as possible to the West Indies before Parliament came to a definite decision on the subject. The Bill was violently and persistently opposed in the Commons by the members for Liverpool, and in the Lords by the Chancellor, Lord Thurlow, but it ultimately became law, and it was the first step taken towards the mitigation of the trade.

A cause which was supported by one of the most powerful prime ministers ever known in England, which

[1] *Wilberforce's Life*, i. 152, 153. [2] *Parl. Hist.* xxvii. 495–506.

was equally favoured by the leaders of the Opposition, and which had already excited a strong outburst of popular enthusiasm, seemed not far from its triumph, but 1789 and 1790 passed without any further measure in Parliament than a renewal of Dolben's Act. The report of the Privy Council had indeed now been drawn up, and Wilberforce introduced the subject in a long, eloquent, and comprehensive speech, and moved that the House should go into committee upon it; but although Pitt, Fox, and Burke strongly supported him, the signs of opposition were more considerable. The enormous amount of capital directly invested in the trade, or closely connected with it, told powerfully on Parliament. Much use was made of some regulating enactments which had lately been carried through the colonial Legislatures. Fears were expressed lest the sudden abolition of the trade should ruin the West Indian Isles, produce dangerous insurrectionary movements among the negroes, perhaps throw a great and lucrative branch of English commerce wholly into the hands of France. There was a demand for further inquiry, and the question was twice adjourned. In the country, however, the popular agitation on the subject showed little or no signs of abatement. A print of the plan and section of a slave ship, which was at this time very widely diffused, had a great influence on the popular imagination.[1] The rising Methodist and Evangelical party had taken up the question very warmly, and most of its prominent leaders were identified with the struggle.

The movement was at the same time strongly supported on the Continent, though by very different men. In France, Montesquieu, and Raynal, and also Necker, who was now at the head of French affairs, had written strongly on the iniquity of the trade, and the cause of

[1] See Clarkson, ii. 110–112.

abolition was vehemently advocated, on the grounds of the rights of men, by a large proportion of the rising revolutionary party. Lafayette, Mirabeau, Brissot, Clavière, and Condorcet had fully adopted it, and it was soon brought before the National Assembly. In France, however, as in England, there were fears that if one nation abolished the trade, its rival would rapidly monopolise it, and the growing distrust and alienation between the two countries was very unfavourable to the cause. Mirabeau told Clarkson that out of the twelve hundred members of the National Assembly, about three hundred would probably vote unconditionally for the suppression of the trade, but that about five hundred more would vote for it, if they had an unequivocal proof that it was the intention of England to abolish it.[1] At present all that could be promised was the suppression of the bounties by which the trade was encouraged.[2]

The fear of the French Revolution and its principles now exercised a great influence on English public opinion. The abolition of the slave trade, being supported by Jacobins, began to wear, in the eyes of many, a Jacobinical aspect, and the horrors of the negro insurrection at St. Domingo, followed by serious negro disturbances in the British colony of Dominica, greatly strengthened the reaction. It was noticed as an incontestable fact, that the opinion of the House of Commons in 1791 had turned decidedly against the abolitionists. In April Wilberforce moved for leave to bring in a Bill to prevent the further importation of slaves into the British West Indies, but after a long and interesting debate, and in spite of the support of Pitt, Fox, and Burke, the motion was defeated by 163 to 88. It was

[1] Clarkson, *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, ii. 163.
[2] Ibid. ii. 148.

remarked, however, that nearly all the eminent men in the House of Commons were in the minority.[1]

It was about this time that the Sierra Leone colony obtained its charter of incorporation. This colony had been established a few years before, largely through the efforts of Granville Sharp. It was intended to be an asylum for freed negroes, and at the same time a great trading centre for the civilisation of Africa and the development of its resources; and it was especially specified in the charter of incorporation, that the company was on no account to deal in slaves or keep any persons in slavery. It became the refuge of many negroes who had obtained their freedom during the war of the American Revolution, and for some years it excited the sanguine hopes of philanthropists. These hopes were, however, not fulfilled. Mismanagement and various misfortunes retarded the development of the colony, and it suffered very seriously from French devastations during the great French war.

In 1792 the struggle passed through some new phases. The earnestness of the popular movement against the slave trade was shown by the multitude who, in all parts of England, agreed to leave off the use of sugar, as being a product of slave labour; by associations established in numerous provincial towns, corresponding with the central Abolition Society in London; by numerous public meetings to protest against the trade, and by the remarkable fact that in this year no less than 519 petitions were presented to Parliament for the abolition of the trade, while there were only four against the abolition, and one in favour of regulation.[2] On the other hand, both the opposition of interest and

[1] See an interesting letter of Romilly on this division, *Life of Romilly*, i. 425, 426. Clarkson, ii. 212, 213.

[2] Clarkson, ii. 352–355.

the opposition of panic had manifestly increased. The horrors of the St. Domingo revolt had sunk deeply in the minds of men. The King and Royal Family were extremely hostile. The public meetings and petitions, which seemed now becoming for the first time an important normal instrument in political struggles, were looked upon by leading politicians with much aversion, as tending to overthrow the independence of political judgment in Parliament and convert the representatives into mere delegates, and the dislike to such proceedings was much intensified by what was happening in France. Pitt himself appears for a time to have been shaken and dubious,[1] but when Wilberforce in April introduced a motion for immediate abolition, he cast off his hesitation and electrified the House by a speech which Fox, Windham, and Grey concurred in pronouncing to be one of the most extraordinary displays of eloquence they had ever heard. The debate had extended till past six in the morning, when in a superb peroration, which Wilberforce said seemed literally inspired, Pitt predicted how, the slave trade being abolished, the tardy justice of Europe would at last atone for the long agonies of Africa by bringing to that benighted continent the light of civilisation and knowledge; and as he spoke the rays of the rising sun streamed suddenly through the windows of the House, and the orator by a happy quotation at once applied the incident as an image and an omen of the future.[2] He concluded by declaring with great emphasis that he would oppose any proposition which tended to postpone even for an hour the abolition of the slave trade.

The House, however, thought otherwise. The policy

[1] *Wilberforce's Life*, i. 341–344.

[2] 'Nos . . . primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis,
Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.'
See Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. 145, 146.

of gradual abolition was now proposed by Dundas, and it was carried by 193 votes to 125. It was a policy which was also adopted in Denmark, where the King had lately issued an ordinance that after the year 1803 the trade should be no longer tolerated in any of his colonies. Such a policy was evidently acceptable to the majority in the House of Commons, and at last, after much dispute, they agreed on the year 1796 as that in which the trade should cease. When, however, the Bill was sent up to the Lords, a demand for more evidence was raised and carried, and the question was again adjourned.

Next year the French war broke out, and reforms of all kinds became unpopular. It was in vain that Wilberforce proposed a committee to consider the slave trade; a Bill for regulating and limiting the importation of negroes into our own colonies; a Bill for prohibiting the supply of slaves by British merchants to foreign colonies. In the country and in both Houses the cause was now associated with Jacobinism, and the association was strengthened when the French Convention in 1794 proclaimed the abolition of slavery in the French colonies, and when Danton openly declared that a great object of the measure was to produce a revolt among the negroes in the English and Spanish colonies. The conditions of the question were indeed profoundly altered, and Dundas urged the extreme danger of taking any step which might be offensive to colonial Legislatures at a time when the war was raging. Wilberforce, however, succeeded in 1794 in carrying his Bill for the abolition of the slave trade with foreigners, through the Commons; but in the Lords, Grenville, who had hitherto been one of his most faithful supporters, refused to defend it. The Duke of Clarence, Lord Abingdon, and Lord Thurlow led the opposition, and the Bill was easily defeated.

In the two following years his motions were defeated in the Commons, and in 1796 the interest on the subject was so languid that Dolben's annual Bill was dropped, for want of a sufficient attendance of members.

It was revived, however, in the following year, and though Wilberforce was again beaten on a motion asking leave to bring in a Bill to discontinue the trade within a limited time, measures were introduced, principally by his opponents, for regulating the conditions both of the slave trade and of slavery, with a view to depriving them of some of their worst characteristics. A parliamentary address was carried to the governors of the colonies, calling on them to take means to promote the welfare of the negroes, so that the trade should ultimately become unnecessary, and some measures in this direction were, shortly after, taken by the Legislatures of the Leeward Isles. An Act of George II. which authorised the sale of slaves at the suit of their master's creditors was repealed, and an Act was passed securing a greater height between the decks of slave ships. The strong feeling of the hour, however, was that the darkest period of a colossal war was no time for abolishing a lucrative trade, at the cost of irritating the colonial Legislatures and immediately after the acquisition of many new slave colonies. The majorities against Wilberforce were not large, but the abstentions were very numerous, and in 1798 and 1799 his motion was again defeated. Thornton at this time introduced a measure prohibiting the purchase of negroes on the northern coast of Africa, on the ground that it frustrated the good that was expected from the Sierra Leone Colony. It was postponed in 1798. In 1799 it passed the Commons, but was defeated in the Lords.

The century thus terminated with the temporary defeat of a cause which twelve years before seemed on

the eve of triumph. I have noticed in a former chapter the sequel of the struggle,[1] and it is not necessary to recur to it. I will here only observe how different a complexion the eighteenth century would have presented to the historian if, in addition to the great Methodist and Evangelical revival of religion, it had been distinguished, as once appeared so probable, by the supreme philanthropic achievement of the abolition of the slave trade. While admitting that the eighteenth century in England was not rich in conspicuous social and political reforms, it should not be forgotten how many great causes had been almost conquered in opinion in the early years of the ministry of Pitt, and would in all human probability have been speedily carried into effect, if the fatal influence of the French Revolution and of the war which it produced had not checked, blighted, and distorted the natural progress. But for this influence, the closing years of the century would probably have seen the abolition of the English slave trade; a reform of Parliament; the removal of the Test and Corporation Acts from the statute book, and an immense reduction both of debt and of taxation. The great industrial transition which has been described might have been accomplished with comparatively little suffering, if it had not occurred when the French war had raised corn to a famine price and absorbed all the attention of the legislators; and it was the introduction from France of the revolutionary spirit into Ireland that for the first time made the Irish problem almost insoluble.

But in spite of the sudden and most disastrous blight which thus fell on so many promising causes, the eighteenth century deserves, I think, a more honourable place than has usually been assigned to it in the history

[1] Vol. v. pp. 341–346.

of England. A century was certainly not without the elements of greatness, which witnessed the victories of Marlborough; the statesmanship of Chatham and his son; the political philosophy of Burke and Adam Smith; the religious movement of Wesley and Whitefield; the conquest of India; the discovery of Australia; the confirmation of the naval, and the establishment of the manufacturing, supremacy of England. In this century religious persecution practically ceased, and the form of the Constitution was thoroughly established. Whatever may be said against the English statesmen which it produced, it is at least certain that they carried England safely through the long period of a disputed succession; maintained free institutions when they were extinguished in almost every country in Europe; transformed Scotland from a scene of utter anarchy into a highly civilised country; kept the name of England for many successive generations very high among the nations of the world, and preserved her in the closing years of the century from the most dangerous revolutionary epidemic of modern times. The period from the Restoration to the accession of the House of Hanover was a period of great selfishness and corruption in the higher spheres of Government, but from the accession of George II. the standard appears to have almost steadily risen. Factious, reckless, and corrupt statesmen often appeared conspicuously on the scene; but it is remarkable how very rarely such men have succeeded, for any considerable time, in acquiring a really controlling and dominant influence in English politics. No one, I think, who follows with care the confidential correspondence of English statesmen and diplomatists during the latter half of the century, can fail to be struck with the essential honesty with which English policy appears to have been conducted, and with the fidelity with which, in the broad lines of their policy,

successive Governments represented and followed the opinion of the country.

The standard of duty, however, in the professions was undoubtedly lower than at present. The spirit of reform was less active. Many abuses, which would not now be tolerated for a day, were almost unquestioned. There was much more hardness and indifference to human suffering, and in the sphere of politics there were grave and scandalous evils. The King himself, during the administration of Lord North, was accustomed to devote many thousands of pounds to the purchase of borough seats.[1] Corruption at elections was constant and flagrant, and numerous sinecures and a lavish patronage were maintained and employed for political purposes.

Yet even in these respects the picture has been often overcharged. Some of the small borough seats were either purchased by public men who wished to secure their independence, or were disposed of in a manner that was very conducive to the interests of the country, and eminently honourable to their patrons. Some, at least, of the sinecures were usefully employed in rewarding merit, or served the purpose of retiring pensions to offices to which such pensions are now attached. If the public revenue was not administered quite as scrupulously as at present, it is at least true that there was little absolute malversation, and the taxation was in general moderate and equitable, and singularly free from those unjust exemptions and privileges which were so general on the Continent.

The question, indeed, whether the standard of patriotism, of public duty, and of public honour has risen

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[1] Some decisive evidence of this has been published by Mr. Maxwell Lyte in his report on the MSS. of the Marquis of Abergavenny.

in England since the eighteenth century, is one which it appears to me far from easy to answer. It by no means follows that, because a nation has advanced in intelligence and even in morality, there must be necessarily a corresponding improvement in its governing and political class, for the improvement in the nation may be more than counterbalanced by the degradation of the suffrage. In one respect, the superiority of the English Parliaments of the eighteenth century will scarcely be disputed. With the doubtful exception of the small and short-lived Jacobite party, those Parliaments contained no party which was not in harmony with the general interests of the Empire, and did not sincerely desire its greatness and its prosperity. Corruption was very widely spread and very undisguised, but political corruption takes many forms, and each age has its characteristic vices. A democratic age, in which power is chiefly won by appeals to the great masses of the population, is likely to be an age of high moral profession, and it will be free from many of the prevalent evils of an aristocratic Government. The avowed cynicism; the disregard in foreign politics for the rights of nations; the open subordination of political interests to personal and family pretensions; the many forms of petty corruption which so often meet us in the eighteenth century, have wholly disappeared or greatly diminished; but another and a not less dangerous family of vices has much tendency to increase. Cant and hypocrisy; the combination of mean action and supersaintly profession; the habitual use of language that does not represent the real sentiments and motives of the speaker; the habit of disguising party and personal motives under lofty and high-sounding professions; the sacrifice of the most enduring interests of the nation, for the purpose of raising a popular cry or winning immediate applause; the systematic subordination of

genuine conviction to popular favour—these are some of the characteristic vices of a democratic age. In such an age the demagogue takes the place of the old sycophant. Bribery is applied not to individuals, but to classes. Dexterous appeals to ignorance, passion, and prejudice become supreme forms of party management. Questions of vast and dangerous import are unscrupulously raised for the purpose of uniting a party or displacing a Government; and a desire to trim the bark to every gust of popular favour produces apostasies, transformations, and alliances compared with which the coalition of Fox and North will appear very venial. No modern statesman would attempt to bribe individuals, or purchase boroughs, like Walpole, or like North; but we have ourselves seen a minister going to the country on the promise that he would, if returned to office, abolish the principal direct tax paid by the class which had still a decisive influence in the constituencies. Irish politics have long since ceased to be conducted by ennobling borough owners and pensioning members of Parliament, but the very impulse and essence of their most powerful popular movement has been an undisguised appeal to the cupidity and the dishonesty of the chief body in the electorate. Lofty maxims and sacred names are invoked in Parliament much more frequently than of old; but he who will observe how questions of the most vital importance to the Constitution of England and the well-being of the Empire have in our generation been bandied to and fro in the party game; how cynically the principles of one year have sometimes been abandoned in the next; how recklessly prominent politicians have sought to gain their ends by setting the poor against the rich, and planting in the nation deadly seeds of class animosities and cupidities, may well learn to look with tolerance and with modesty upon the England of the past.

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